Thinking, Knowing, Acting: Epistemology and Ethics in Plato and Ancient Platonism

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Thinking, Knowing, Acting: Epistemology and Ethics in Plato and Ancient Platonism

Edited by

Mauro Bonazzi
Filippo Forcignanò
Angela Ulacco

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Introduction

Over the last years, the interest in the origin and development of Platonism in the Imperial Period has grown exponentially. This fact is largely due to the acknowledgement that Western philosophical thought has been fundamentally shaped by the way ancient and late ancient Platonists read Plato's dialogues and how they were transmitted to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, thus triggering centuries of debate that characterise the long history of Platonism. Scholars have investigated in depth the metaphysical and to a certain extent the epistemological and ethical aspects of this reception. However, the correlation between the two last factors, epistemology and ethics, which are usually considered of central importance in the Platonic tradition, has not received the attention it deserves. What roles did epistemology and theory of knowledge play in ethical and political discussions? Is it possible to discuss and solve moral and social questions with the help of epistemology, tracing them back to a cognitive dimension? In other words: how should the relationship between knowing (in all those forms) and acting be conceived? This question certainly attracts great interest in contemporary philosophical and political debate as well. It was definitely a core issue for Plato and his interpreters in Antiquity. An intensely discussed question is the moral or ethical intellectualism inspired by Socrates, according to which science and virtue are unified, whereby the search for knowledge corresponds to a search oriented toward moral action. With all its obvious permutations, this connection has never ceased to attract the attention of Platonic interpreters, who have certainly been compelled to engage with Aristotle's criticism of Plato and his personal contribution to the definition of ethics as a 'practical science'.

The aim of this book is to offer a fresh perspective on this issue from both a historical and systematic perspective. In particular, the book addresses the connection between knowing and acting by viewing it from a specific angle, namely conflict or disagreement. There are not only social conflicts, but also conflicts between desires, between reason and necessity, norm, and nature. Up to what point is it possible to analyse and solve conflicts considering them as epistemological issues, i.e., a lack of knowledge, or faulty application of knowledge? This raises further questions: how many forms of knowledge are there? Do different levels of knowledge correspond to different manifestations of practical activity? How important is knowledge of the self for action?

The first part of this book deals with the social, juridical, and theoretical premises of Plato's investigations, from the 'early' to 'late' dialogues, with particular attention given to the relation between science and practical action.

The last part of the volume focusses on the reception of the topic in the Platonic tradition (from Eudorus to Plotinus). The central part is dedicated to Aristotle, as his criticism of Plato and his foundation of a practical science played a key role in the Platonic tradition. The chapters can stand on their own but, at the same time, they trace a long arc encompassing the issues put forward in the book's title. Thus any reader would benefit from devoting attention to the entire volume. We hope that this volume will be useful to a broad range of readers: to all researchers working on Plato, Aristotle, Middle Platonism, and Neoplatonism, but also to those interested in epistemological, psychological, and ethical issues.

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The Editors

CHAPTER 1

Acting and Knowing before Plato: on Solon's Theodicy

Mauro Bonazzi

Abstract

The paper argues for a compatibilist reading of the two most important of Solon's poems, the *Elegy on the Polis* and the *Elegy to the Muses*. In the two poems Solon claims that the gods intervene in the human world and sanction good and evil actions. The problem is, however, that human beings are not always able to understand the divine perspective. This leads to recognize that they need divine help and therefore the exhortation to moderation.

One *vetus quaestio* for any reader of Solon's verses regards the compatibility between his two most famous poems, the so-called *Elegy on the Polis* and the *Elegy to the Muses*.[1] The problem is clear, as a quick presentation of the two poems suffices to show. Let's start with the *Elegy on the Polis*. After four verses which stress faith in the divine aid of Athena and underline the guilt of those wicked citizens who drag the city into ruin, there is a description of the effects that *dysnomia* has over the city: first is depicted the behaviour of the bad citizens (and leaders) who try to destroy the city (5–14); then Dike appears and there is a long description of the concrete consequences of her fury on the city (17–29). After that, Solon intervenes in the first person to warn his fellow citizens of the danger of not respecting Dike (30–31), and to exalt the opposite situation of *Eunomie* and of her positive effects on the city (32–39). In short, the *Elegy on the Polis* may be read as an exhortation to the citizens to follow justice. Human beings can and must build a just city that will flourish under the benevolent protection of the gods. Indeed, divine justice "bears silent witness to the present and the past and in time assuredly comes to exact retribution" (15–16): human beings must therefore decide whether they want to go against

1 As for the text I follow Noussia 2010, who adopts the numeration of Gentili – Prato: the *Elegy on the Polis* is fr. 3 (= fr. 4 West) and the *Elegy to the Muses* fr. 1 (= 13 West).

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her, incurring the unavoidable punishment (17–31) or if they want to respect her, with all the good consequences that will follow (32–39). Following in the footsteps of important scholars such as Werner Jaeger and Gregory Vlastos, all readers agree that this is an important text, full of original insights.[2]

In archaic Greece, the great champion of justice and a touchstone for any subsequent writer was Hesiod. Solon's novelty emerges in the way he contributes to a better defence of justice, proceeding beyond him.[3] Hesiod had already pleaded the cause of justice. Solon, so it is argued by the two scholars, displays a much more coherent and deep comprehension of reality, which makes his defence much more effective. A joint reading of Hesiod's works, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, shows that he strongly underlined the divine nature of Justice, and the consequent necessity for human beings to respect and follow it: Hesiod's major aim is to convince human beings that justice must be respected. How does he defend this thesis? By arguing that Justice is the daughter of Zeus (*Theogony* 901–903), and is therefore under his protection; whoever does not respect her will meet the inevitable punishment:

> There is virgin Justice, the daughter of Zeus, who is honoured and reverenced among the gods who dwell on Olympus, and whenever anyone hurts her with lying slander, she sits beside her father, Zeus the son of Cronos, and tells him of men's wicked heart, until the people pay for the mad folly of their princes who, evilly minded, pervert judgment and give sentence crookedly. […]. He does mischief to himself who does mischief to another, and evil planned harms the plotter most. The eye of Zeus, seeing all and understanding all, beholds these things too, if so he will, and fails not to mark what sort of justice is this that the city keeps within it.
>
> *Works and Days* 256–270; transl. EVELYN-WHITE

Justice is divine; whoever violates Justice offends the gods, who intervene and punish the transgressor: it is therefore more useful to respect justice, if one does not want to be punished by the gods. All in all, to impart this teaching is the main goal of the *Works and Days*. But here we face a problem.[4] The punishment is directly entrusted to god, but it is not clear in what this punishment precisely consists. The most reasonable explanation is that god directly

2 Jaeger 1966, Vlastos 1995 (ed. or. 1946).
3 More precisely, Solon is interested in *Works* 1–10 (hymn to Zeus) and 213–326 (justice), see Irwin 2005, p. 163.
4 See the very useful discussion in Sihvola 1989.

intervenes in human affairs (famine, plagues, etc.), when human beings violate Justice. This, however, does not appear to be confirmed by our experience, as Hesiod is obliged to admit at the very end of his great exhortation to justice: not always are wrongdoers punished. After confidently singing that Justice is protected by Zeus, Hesiod appears therefore troubled by the concern that the wrongdoer may escape punishment. The conclusion is that he can only *hope* (or *estimate*) that Zeus will always intervene:[5]

> Now, therefore, may neither I myself be righteous among men, nor my son – for then it is a bad thing to be righteous – if indeed the unrighteous shall have the greater right. But I think (*eolpa*) all-wise Zeus will not yet bring that to pass.
>
> 270–273; transl. EVELYN-WHITE

Solon's starting point and goal are the same as Hesiod's. But he develops his argument in favour of justice in a different context, in which the inevitability of punishment is no longer entrusted to the direct visitations of god, but is rather immanent in human actions, arising from human unjust behaviour. As has been said, Solon develops a "naturalized notion of justice":[6] there is an intrinsic order of reality which guarantees the existence of justice and brings about an inevitable punishment of any violation. The key verse is 17, where injustice is identified with a wound. The violation, like a wound, is already in itself a punishment. As a matter of fact, justice can be compared to the correct functioning of an organism. An organism functions well when each part does its own work and respects the functions of the other parts; where on the contrary there is an alteration of such a balance, you immediately have disease, which is nothing but the alteration itself, the prevailing of one part over the others. "When the causes of the disease are active, the effects of the disease are unavoidable by the laws of physical necessity."[7] The same discourse holds also in the case of the social organism of the *polis*: injustice, *dysnomia*, corresponds to the disease; it is like a wound, an injury (*helkos*, 17). Like the wound it means evils, damage, and misfortune, that is *dysnomia*: *dysnomia* is at the same time the result of and the punishment for injustice in the city. Injustice, therefore, taken as the abuse of one part by the others, immediately and concretely turns into pathologies such as war, civil strife, and slavery, which affect the entire

5 See for instance Manuwald 1989: 5, who speaks of a "etwas skeptische Hesiod."
6 Vlastos 1995.
7 Almeida 2003: 80.

community and each individual member of it.[8] Just as the disease affects the whole organism, so too does injustice affect the whole *polis*. The inevitability of divine retribution is therefore proved, for it corresponds with injustice itself (*dysnomie*), taken as the violation of the natural order of the *polis* (17–20; cf. also fr. 9). In Solon Justice does not have to complain to his father Zeus.[9]

Much more resolutely than Hesiod, Solon pushes his audience "to look at history, considering cause and effect,"[10] to see, as Jaeger (perhaps too emphatically) writes, "the iron law of causality" that corresponds to the necessity of nature and governs political life.[11] In other words, as in Hesiod, Solon argues for a theological view of justice (god is indeed the guarantor of justice: one must not overemphasize his departure from the traditional religious conception of justice), but he discards the view of a direct intervention whereby an avenging Zeus sends upon the unjust city plagues or famines: divine punishment immanently consists in the upsetting of the social organism which is caused by any violation of the right.[12] This explains why punishment is inevitable (*pantos*, 16). To understand this is to understand the utility of justice; in other words what Solon succeeds in teaching (*didaxai*, 30) is the necessity of citizens promoting good order in their community. For these reasons the *Elegy on the Polis* can be legitimately regarded as a real breakthrough in Greek thought. So far so good.

The problem is that Solon is also the author of another elegy, no less famous and important, which appears to endorse a different position, whose compatibility with fr. 3 is the object of many debates. In the *Elegy to the Muses* (which focuses more on the individual than on the community) it is precisely the link between injustice and punishment (or justice and rewards) that seems to be questioned. At the beginning, the two poems do not diverge: in the *Elegy to the Muses* too Solon trusts in divine protection, persuaded that only what is done in accordance with Justice will bring about positive effects, whereas what is unjustly obtained will be unavoidably sanctioned and punished by Zeus. In the first 32 verses, at stake is the divine justice that rules over the world of human beings; we do not register substantial divergences from the *Elegy on the Polis*.

In the second part of the elegy, however, everything changes, or so it seems. If in the first part, like in the *Elegy on the Polis*, respect for divine justice is the criterion that human beings have for correctly and successfully conducting their lives, in the second section everything appears uncertain:

8 As Irwin (2005: 182) has rightly remarked, "the suffering is described in a way that emphasizes the individuality (as well as the general nature) of those who suffer."

9 Irwin 2005: 174.

10 Vlastos 1995: 33.

11 Jaeger 1966: 93.

12 Jaeger 1953: 266.

> In all actions there is risk and no one knows, when something starts, how it is going to turn out. The man who tries to act rightly falls unawares into great and harsh calamity, while to the one who acts badly the god gives success in all things, an escape from his folly.
>
> 1.65–70; transl. GERBER

Sure, gods continue to rule over human affairs; but now punishment seems to strike good and evil people indiscriminately: "there is revealed ruin, which now one, now another has, whenever Zeus sends it to punish them" (1.75–76). Undoubtedly, these affirmations appear hardly compatible with what we were reading in the other elegy and in the first part of the poem. How then to evaluate Solon, his thought, and these two important poems?

Given that the *Elegy on the Polis* and the first part of the *Elegy to the Muses* basically converge, it will be convenient to start with the latter: if we can solve the tension which appears to split this poem into two parts, the comparison between the two poems will be consequently made easier.

2. The interpretation of this elegy has been the object of many debates in modern scholarship, and most, if not all solutions, have been proposed – all with good reasons. Of course, one can simply say that this is a 'patchwork' without any internal coherence. Before doing this, however, it is wiser to try to see whether we can account for the apparent discrepancies. The basic distinction is between those we may call "separatists" and "unitarians" – those who deny that the two (or more) parts of the elegy can be reconciled because they do not come from the same text, and those who claim that that a unified reading is possible.

At first sight the separatist thesis seems very reasonable, and it has been widely supported in the past; but in my opinion, it is not that clear that this is true. Indeed, what does such a thesis imply? The options are basically two: one may argue either that the two (or more) parts do not belong to the same elegy or, more drastically, that one of the two parts does not belong to Solon at all. But if we take the first option,[13] we observe that it does not help much. It is true that different poems can convey different ideas. Still, the problem of accounting for Solon's position remains – did he a hold a coherent position or not? Indeed, this is the same problem we have to face with regard to our elegy. This option simply shifts the problem to a different level, regarding not so much the coherence of a single poem as the coherence of Solon's thought in general. But if it were true that Solon is not as coherent as we assume he must be, why should one deny that he can be incoherent also within a single poem? If these

13 Lewis 2006: 74–95; see also Colesanti 2003; Lardinois 2006; Aloni – Iannucci 2016.

thoughts are correct, the first hypothesis becomes useless. As for the second option,[14] it is true that in Archaic Greece there was no ideal of personal authorship such as we have now, so that it is possible that some poems were created out of other compositions by different poets (within this context it is perhaps interesting to remark that verses 65–70 and 71–76 are preserved also in Theognis). Or it may be suggested that such different parts were later conflated during the process of textual transmission (for instance it may be suggested that in the anthologies some lemma went lost, and different poems were unified). In principle, many reasons can be suggested in favour of such a reconstruction. But the evidence does not seem to support such views. I am not an expert philologist and I will limit myself to two examples which show that such an hypothesis is not easy to prove. (a) Of the two parts, in consideration also of other poems such as fr. 3, it would be most reasonable to consider the second, more pessimistic part inauthentic. And yet verses of this part, in particular verse 71, are attested by many ancient sources as uncontroversially solonian.[15] (b) As for the occurrence of some verses in Theognis (cf. also 197–208), it may be replied that this is rather a proof of Solon's success.[16] In sum, it seems to me that it is methodologically dangerous to argue for such a trenchant hypothesis in the absence of any real evidence. The burden of proof falls on the separatists. And until they are able to provide real, uncontroversial, textual evidence showing that the elegy is a mere patchwork, I would say that the most reasonable option remains the opposite, unitarian, one.

Of course, in itself this does not mean much either. In the past, for instance, it was common to argue in favour of the unitarian view on the assumption that the archaic Greeks did not have the same idea of logic as we have today, so that they did not see contradictions where we now see them. It may be suggested, as indeed it has been suggested, in other words, that Solon was moving from one particular idea to another one without logical structure, changing his mind as topics struck him, distracted by concrete points of interest.[17] Richard Lattimore, for instance, argues in a remarkable paper that this elegy consists in a "self-generating series of connected ideas" (1947: 162), as if "we are watching Solon think" (169) without any single subject serving as a guiding theme ("there is no subject. Solon is simply proceeding from thought to thought"), but perhaps with only a "subconscious idea," that is the desire of all human beings for prosperity (170). Now, to say that this elegy is constituted by a "progression

14 See *e.g.,* Perrotta 1924 and Maddalena 1943.

15 Arist. *Pol.* 1256b31; Plut. *De cup. Div.* 523e; Basil. *Ad adulesc.* 9.103.

16 See Colesanti 2003: 95 listing many other parallels with Alcaeus, Tirtaeus, Mimnermus.

17 Henderson 1982.

of thought" (162), which deepens the problems in all its complexity is certainly correct.[18] But to deny that there is an underlying structure, as if Solon were simply setting down his reflections as they occurred to him – as if he were "at the mercy of his own whims"[19] – is perhaps too much. It is true that it makes no sense to speak of logical structures or arguments in an absolute way, as if they were one and the same everywhere and in every time. Besides, we must not neglect the context, which is an oral context. As Lewis (2006: 61) has correctly remarked, "our analysis is conditioned by *reading* what was earlier *spoken*, a point that bears upon how the poem will be understood, and our reading must not be allowed to overtake the listening. The aim of the poet was not to produce a work that could stand up to written analysis, but rather to produce an oral *kosmos* that could lead his listeners to a desired effect. The purpose of writing was to key the reader's mind to recreate the sounds, and therefore the ability to hear the words." But still, in the present case, it does not appear to me an explanation at all to argue that for the archaic Greeks, unlike ourselves, to claim that (a) god defends justice, and (b) everything happens by chance without order or reason, did not raise problems. The view of Solon "at the mercy of his own whims" is not a satisfying explanation. If it were so, it would be better to conclude with Herman Fränkel that in Solon there is no coherence, but an abundance of contradictions.[20] If we want to endorse a unitarian position, we must therefore use all our efforts in order to see whether we can find a coherent structure in the elegy. For, is it so sure that the elegy lacks an internal order? Other scholars have argued differently, and reasonably so.

3. Some very promising remarks come from the papers of two German scholars, Bernd Manuwald and Heinz-Günther Nesselrath.[21] They start from a brilliant intuition and rest on two main theses. The starting intuition is that the division into two parts can be explained as the presentation of the same situation from two different points of view.[22] In the first part (1–29/32), Solon introduces the divine, omniscient perspective, in the second part (29/33–76) the human, ignorant perspective. There is not, therefore, a real break in the chain of thoughts, but rather a change of perspective. Solon examines human acts from two sides, from the perspective of the gods and from the perspective

18 Cf. also Nesselrath 1992: 97.
19 Lewis 2006: 106.
20 Fränkel 1975: 237.
21 Manuwald 1989 and Nesselrath 1992.
22 Cf. Nesselrath 1992: 98 ("In eigener Person hatte er zuletzts in v. 8 gesprochen, von V. 17 an sich dann ganz auf die 'überirdische Warte' des Weltenlenkers und – richters Zeus begeben und das Zusammenspiel Gott-Menschen ganz aus dieser Distanz betrachtet; in V. 33 kehrt we mit 'wir Sterbliche' dezidiert auf die irdish-menschliche Dasenseben zurück").

of human beings. Once this point has been granted, it is possible to observe that the two different points of view do not exclude a common position. This leads to the two main theses. The first is divine intervention: god intervenes. Indeed, human ignorance, as it is described in the second part of the elegy, does not exclude divine intervention; divine intervention is on the contrary affirmed throughout the entire elegy. I have already remarked on the strategic importance of the adverb πάντως in the *Elegy on the Polis* for indicating the inevitability of divine intervention. In the *Elegy to the Muses* the same adverb occurs four times (8, 28, 31, 55). This is a first, and very important, inviolable principle: god intervenes to sanction human actions.[23]

The theme of human ignorance (and of the double perspective) helps us to introduce the second point, that god always sanctions a mistake.[24] In the second part everything is considered from the human point of view, which is weak. In principle, due to their ignorance, human beings do not know precisely what is the correct course of action to take in a given moment (the *terma* of verse 71). And it is in consequence of their ignorance that they risk making a mistake (65) for which they will be punished. But in itself, this does not exclude the second common principle, that when god intervenes, he punishes for some reason, in consequence of a mistake.[25] This point is more controversial, but it is stated both in the first and in the second part: that it is stated in first part it is commonly agreed (see 17–29/32); not all readers, on the other hand, are willing to concede that it is stated also in the second part (all in all, this is the problem of the elegy). In fact, it is stated at the very end of the second part, in verses 75–76, where the same term occurs: the *tisis* of verse 25 and *tino* of verses 29 and 31 are paralleled by the *tino* (*teisomenen*) of verse 76.[26] This is also the term used in fr. 3, 16.[27] More precisely, in these final verses Solon's point is that punishment occurs always in retribution for excess (concretely: excessive, immoderate wealth). This is the second common principle: a causal relationship exists even though we are not able to see it.

Read in this way, therefore, the elegy has its own unity. It revolves around the existence of justice and provides a warrant for the mechanism of punishment.

23 Nesselrath 1992: 101, 102 ("*alle* Gaben (gute un schlechte) von den Göttern stammen").
24 Nesselrath 1992: 102.
25 Nesselrath 1992: 97.
26 Cf. Noussia 2010: 198: "It is only in the final distich that *ate* is reintegrated into the nature of divine agency, as it is presented at the beginning of the poem … The controlling principle of Zeus' theodicy evoked in the first part surfaces again, and Solon thus gives an especially convincing account of the existence and operation of *dike* beyond all doubt."
27 Manuwald 1989: 9.

The elegy, in other words, aims at making sense of divine justice – not always easy to detect in the world of human actions – human weakness being the other, and closely connected, main theme of the elegy:[28] once this is shown, the only viable option for human beings, in spite of (but also in consequence of) their ignorance, is to behave correctly (which, concretely speaking, amounts to avoiding excessive wealth).

4. In order to see whether this interpretation is correct, we must verify whether the two major points are correct. In order to do so, we should read the elegy and see whether they are confirmed in the text. The most problematic parts are verses 29–32 and 63–76.

In the first part, in full agreement with the *Elegy on the Polis*, Solon argues that god supervises human actions, protecting justice and punishing injustice. To show that this is so is Solon's major goal. And the need to underline this point helps us to understand the meaning of verses 29–32, which serve to keep together the two parts and which are the most problematic section of the elegy. Solon's firm belief is that gods intervene; empirical observation, however, shows that unjust people escape punishment (this was also Hesiod's problem). How to account for this fact? By appealing to the traditional belief that descendants pay for the faults of their ancestors:[29]

> But one man pays the penalty at once, another later, and if they themselves escape the penalty and the pursuing destiny of the gods does not overtake them, it assuredly comes at another time; the innocent pay the penalty either their children or a later progeny.
>
> 1.29–32; transl. GERBER

It is often assumed that now a completely different section begins, with a different position. In fact, it is more reasonable that, from now on, Solon's major task will be to explain what it means, within the context of what he has so far said, that punishment falls on the descendants. Let's note: *anaitioi* are potentially all human beings, as is shown by the use of first person plural at verse 33. So there is a close connection between the two parts. Any one of us can think of himself as innocent, and consequently blame a blind and capricious fate for

28 Manuwald 1989: 19. This conclusion is not contradicted, *pace* Lewis 2006, 83–84, by verses 29–30: Solon's emphasis, here, is that even though it seems that the guilty escapes, punishment arrives all the same.

29 For some parallels, see Hom. *Il.* 4.160–163; Hes. *Op.* 282–285; Theogn. 199–208; Herod. 1.91 e 6.86; Aesch. *Ag.* 58, 367–384; Soph. *Ant.* 1074–1076; see Noussia 2010: 164.

the inconveniences and evils that befall him. But the problem is this: is it really so? As a matter of fact it may be that, if and when we pay, we pay for the faults of our ancestors. So there is a rationale for what happens. But still this is not entirely satisfying, because we might think that it remains senseless and arbitrary that we pay for faults that are not ours, without having done anything wrong. But, again, is it really so? For what, precisely, are the *anaitioi* punished? There are two possibilities. The first, which leads to a separatist reading, is apparently more reasonable, but in my view incorrect and contradicted by the text. Who are the *anaitioi*? They are the innocents, those without guilt: by consequence, when they are punished, they are punished not for their faults but only for the faults of their ancestors, in order to expiate these faults. In my opinion, this reading does not hold in itself (the idea is not paralleled), and because the comparison with the other verses shows that a more coherent reading is possible, one that provides a different solution to the problem.

In verses 63–76, after emphasizing the principle that everything is divinely governed, Solon sketches two possibilities (see at verse 33 the reference to the *agathoi* and *kakoi*), which explain the cause of the mistake. The first possibility regards good people (67–68): they are good people, but they were not able to *pronoein*, that is they lack foresight, they are unable to understand in advance what is happening. Since they "fail to realize soon enough that they have reached the *terma ploutou* allotted by the Gods,"[30] they therefore make a mistake and for this they are punished.[31] As for the bad people (68–73), their success is only temporary and its failure only delayed: freedom from ignorance (70) is only temporary, because these men are not able to stand within the limits that are assigned to them; they surpass them and incur punishment. Here it is explained how they both pay: the final verse does not say that punishment is random, but summarizes the two different typologies discussed in the preceding verses.

Indeed, in the final verses it is once again claimed that all those who incur divine punishment pay for something that they have made (and in consequence of their ignorance: for both explanations depend on ignorance). So there is no blind or irrational punishment of human beings; and given that human beings can be virtually identified with the *anaitioi* of line 32, I suggest that this is also the correct reading of verses 29–32. In sum: before line 29 and after line 32 punishment is always in retribution for something. The most economical explanation is therefore that this very same model also holds in the case of lines

30 Noussia 2010: 195.
31 Manuwald 1989: 15 n. 58.

29–32, and the final verses explain how the *anaitioi* are punished. When gods punish, there is always a reason: *anaitoi* are guiltless with regard to the faults of their predecessors, but are themselves guilty of some mistake which is the cause of their downfall. This alternative reading is therefore more promising, and a (more or less) coherent reading of the poem is possible.

As we have already remarked, in the first part, in full agreement with the *Elegy on the Polis*, Solon argues that gods supervise human actions, protecting justice and punishing injustice. This claim must face an evident objection. Human experience appears to show that it is not true that all those who deserve divine punishment for their faults are effectively punished. In order to dispel this opinion, Solon introduces the principle of the delayed punishment, which is then analysed from the weak, partial, and incomplete point of view of human beings, and not from the omniscient point of view of the god (and of the poet who speaks on god's behalf). If the guilty are not punished, their sons will be punished. That is, the *anaitioi* will be punished. And they will be punished for two mistakes, the mistake of their ancestors and their own mistake.

5. If this reconstruction is correct, there are some interesting consequences that deserve to be underlined. But first a problem must be addressed. If this reading is correct, one must be ready to admit that the mistake of the *anaitioi* is somehow induced by the god. There must be a connection between the ancestor and the *anaitios*, and this connection must be provided by god. It must be god that somehow induces the *anaitios* to make a mistake and then to incur a punishment which is also the punishment for the mistake of his ancestor. Such a reading might appear controversial, for it may be objected that it is not fair to attribute to god this will to induce the mistake in some *anaitios*. But in fact, I would say that this very well describes what the human condition is, according to Solon, as opposed to that of the gods. Nowadays we tend to regard god as being much more powerful than us but also as a provident father, as someone taking care of us. This is not Solon's view, which clearly appears in the first part of the poem: god is omnipotent, but his concern is not so much human beings as the order of the universe. And this order is preserved by him: when mortals violate this order they are punished. The second part, on the other hand, presents the human view and helps us to understand more precisely what the difference is between gods and humans. It is of course a question of power, but also of knowledge and ignorance. What makes the real difference is that human beings do not have direct access to god's mind. They know that god rules but they do not know precisely what they have to do. This is the cause of their ruin: ignorance. Here we meet what is probably the most interesting point of Solon's elegy.

Indeed, one major theme of the elegy, and of Solon's thought more generally, is the limits of human knowledge.[32] This is an important motive in Solon's thought, which returns in many other fragments.

> Wisdom's hidden essence, which alone holds the measure to everything, is the most difficult to discern. (γνωμοοσύνης δ' ἀφανὲς χαλεπώτατόν ἐστι νοῆσαι \ μέτρον, ὃ δὴ πάντων πείρατα μοῦνον ἔχει.)
>
> fr. 20 G.-P.² = 16 W.²; transl. GERBER, slightly modified[33]

> The mind of the immortals is altogether hidden from men (πάντῃ δ'ἀθανάτων ἀφανὴς νόος ἀνθρώποισιν.) (fr. 21 G.-P.² = 17 W.²)

Besides, this theme can be paralleled with many other testimonies from the archaic period. For instance these verses, and the *Elegy to the Muses*, recall some famous affirmations of Semonides, whose influence on Solon's poems has been detected by many scholars:[34]

> O child, Deep-thundering Zeus holds the end
> of all things, as it is and which he establishes as he wishes.
> There is no understanding in men (νόος δ'οὐκ ἐπ'ἀνθρώποισιν), but they live
> Upon the day, like cattle, knowing nothing (οὐδὲν εἰδότες)
> Of how the god will bring each thing to an end (1.1–5)

These are well-known texts, which are often assembled under the label of pessimism – or of *amechania*, following Dodds's famous remarks on the sense of helplessness before divine hostility, which is typical of this age.[35] This is of course correct, so that one may be tempted to speak also in the case of the elegy to the Muses of epistemological pessimism. Undoubtedly, the dominant tone of this poem is set by its desolate description of human epistemological weakness and vulnerability. This is the real cause of human mistakes and consequent ruin.[36] As has been remarked, the emphasis on the opposition

32 Nesselrath 1992: 101; see also Allen 1949. The theme of ignorance can also help to explain the meaning of verses 33–62: the long list of (vain) human activities would precisely serve the aim of introducing the issue of ignorance, whose relation with punishment will be explained at the end.

33 On this fragment, see Allen 1949: 62.

34 See for instance Lattimore 1947: 171.

35 Dodds 1951: 30.

36 Nesselrath 1992: 100–104.

between divine knowledge and human opinion and that between what humans can and cannot have experience of (what is seen and not seen) makes him, in a certain sense, like a proto-sceptic.[37]

But this is not the whole story, because according to my reading, and against the alternative reading (in which human beings are really at the mercy of destiny),[38] human beings are not completely abandoned in total obscurity, so to speak, for they are also provided with an indication, a rule to follow. The contrast with Semonides is interesting. In Semonides we have radical pessimism and no way out: our perceptual consciousness cannot give us any understanding of what happens and will happen; the only possible attitude human beings can have is basically reduced to that of enduring (another interesting parallel is Archilochus' *tlemosyne* in fr. 7). In Solon, on the contrary, pessimism is tempered with an implicit suggestion that the poet offers to his audience, by the indication of a rule, the rule of moderation, that is the refusal of the excess which leads to *hybris* and punishment. In the 'separatist' reading, given that human beings appear to be punished at random, there is nothing that they can do in order to avoid such a tragic destiny. In the "unitarian" reading, they can at least follow moderation. True, moderation alone does not guarantee complete security (which explains the need to invoke the protection of the gods – their gift being the "gift of wisdom");[39] however it offers better prospects.[40] As Hermann Fränkel has remarked: "only through restraint and moderation can we break the vicious circle, and this is what Solon recommends in his other elegies."[41]

Again, it is interesting to remark that this same thought occurs also elsewhere in other fragments:

> For excess breeds insolence, whenever great prosperity comes to men who are not sound of mind (τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὕβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἕπηται \ ἀνθρώποις |οπόσοις μὴ νόος ἄρτιος ᾖ.)
>
> 8.3–4 G.-P.^{2} = 6 W.^{2}; transl. GERBER

> You who had more than your fill of many good things, calm the stern heart within your breast and moderate your ambition (οἳ πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν

37 Lewis 2006: 92–93.
38 So for instance Lewis 2006: 90.
39 Allen 1949: 51 and 60; Manuwald 1989: 20; Nesselrath 1992: 104.
40 Noussia 2010: 199.
41 Fränkel 1975: 236.

> ἐς κόρον ἠλάσατε \ ἐν μετρίοισι τίθεσθε μέγαν νόον); for we shall not comply nor will these things be fitting for you.
>
> fr. 5 G.-P.^{2} = 4c W.^{2}; transl. GERBER

The sequence is always flawed: *noos*, *koros*, *hubris*, *ate* (that is "psychic bewilderment or blindness that can lead a man to go berserk:" Lewis 2006: 104) and then punishment. The first part of this sequence is very interesting and original. In Solon *koros* has a completely new and unprecedented meaning. In Homer and Hesiod it means satiety:

> Solon's verses are the first instances in Greek literature in which *koros* is cited as unambiguously bad […]. Solon describes it as a corruption in *noos*, a blind, wanton desire for more beyond one proper measure. The key development here is an explicit shift in the meaning of *koros* from 'satiety' to 'excess', and from the satisfaction of actual needs to the desire for unjust gain. *Koros* becomes excessive greed, an irrational desire that recognizes no limits to the ways in which wealth or power can be obtained, and that strives for acquisition from *hubris*, looting and slavery. Material success leads to the demand for more, at the expense of others, with dire consequences for the *polis*.[42]

This produces *hybris* in "an unending cycle of *koros* and *hybris*: overabundance generates disrespect for others and contempt for what one already possesses, both of which inspire the individual to pursue greedy satisfactions; but greed itself, if it successfully achieves its goal, leads in turn to further degrees of fullness, which sets the cycle in motion again."[43] This psychological analysis of human behaviour is very well known and commented on by scholars. What needs to be underlined is the role of intelligence, *noos*, in this mechanism. The cause of all this is to be found in *noos*, which indicates the capacity to understand a situation beyond immediate sight. It is this capacity that prompts us to act. "An excess in *noos* would of course not mean knowing too much, but rather being improperly disposed to understand how one should control one's pursuit of power, prestige, or wealth."[44] An improper *noos* is the cause of

42 Lewis 2006: 30; see also Balot 2001: 90–91 for political consequences and Irwin 2005: 207–220 on the influence of Solon's use of the term. A possible, prior and negative, parallel is Sappho 68(a).8.

43 Balot 2001: 92–93.

44 Lewis 2006, p. 31.

immoderation and injustice; a normal, *dikaios*, *noos* is on the contrary what produces good results.

What is important is therefore the strict and parallel connection which keeps together intelligence and moderation on the one hand, and ignorance and excess on the other. And this enables us to connect the end of the elegy with the beginning, where it was already claimed that the real cause of human evils depended on avidity and on the insatiable wish to have more and more wealth (cf. 71–76 with 7–13; see also fr. 3.6 e 11–14). "The last distich of the poem also restates the idea of 25–31 on the causal relationship between human behaviour and Zeus' justice and the inevitability of divine retribution for the unjust (because they are insatiable): the variability of human fortunes at this point of the poem puts the emphasis again on the wish of acquisition of (excessive) wealth as a paradigmatic origin of seemingly undeserved disasters (because just wealth involves no retribution: 9 f.) and thus leads us to doubt that men are merely at the mercy of Fate."[45] In so doing Solon can finally "bring back to a regulating principle, which consists in the right measure in the possession of wealth, the nihilistic idea of the destiny which rules in an arbitrary and capricious way economic and personal success."[46] All depends on the correct measure, moderation, which is the criterion of justice. And this, in its turn, depends on knowledge, which Solon requests from the Muses. "Indeed, in this poem the ring-composition is probably something more than a formal structural device, which strategically serves to enclose the long presentation of human action within Solon's faith in a divine order."[47]

6. Insofar as the consistency of the *Elegy to the Muses* can been proved, it follows also that it is compatible with the *Elegy on the Polis*, which was our starting problem.[48] The object of the two poems is not identical, given that the *Elegy on the Polis* concentrates on a strictly political theme, whereas the *Elegy to the Muses* expresses rather Solon's views on individuals. Clearly, the two poems do not perfectly overlap. But they appear to be consistent and compatible on many major points. According to several scholars the main difference is that in the *Elegy on the Polis* divine intervention is taken to be effective both in negative and in positive cases, whereas in the *Elegy to the Muses* divine intervention is taken to be operative at random, so that everything is uncertain. But such an account, I hope I have shown, is not correct. It may be true that there is a difference in tone, in the sense that Solon appears to be much more

45 Noussia 2010: 202.
46 Noussia 2001: 220 following Jaeger 1953: 220.
47 Noussia 2010: 198.
48 See also Noussia 2010, 219.

hopeful and optimistic in the *Elegy on the Polis* than in the *Elegy to the Muses*. But scholars too often tend to overemphasize such optimism. Solon does not claim that the polis will never be destroyed: this is contradicted by the fact that the citizens are now destroying it (fr. 3.5–6; and Solon, the poet who assumes the role of divine warner, must intervene precisely because he want to prevent this degeneration).[49] What he wants to stress is that if and when the polis will be destroyed the responsible party will be its citizens and not the gods. This is perfectly compatible with the *Elegy to the Muses*, where it is claimed that divine punishment is always retribution for human wrongdoing. On the positive side, it is true that the *Elegy on the Polis* argues that good actions always lead to positive results, but it is not true that this does not apply in the case of the *Elegy to the Muses*. In this latter poem it is not stated that good actions cannot guarantee good results; it is stated that to be good is much more difficult than one may assume because it is easy, given our weakness, to make mistakes. Sure, in the *Elegy to the Muses* Solon is less confident than in the *Elegy on the Polis*; but what he says in the one poem does not contradict what he says in the other.

In conclusion, it seems to me that there is no strict incompatibility. In both cases the emphasis falls on the inevitability of divine punishment in retribution for wrongdoing; and in both cases it is excessive greed that leads to the wrongdoing. In its turn excessive greed is made dependent in both poems on an intellectual dimension (cf. fr. 3.5): the major problem for human beings is their epistemological vulnerability, which is the cause of moral, practical, and political mistakes and faults. Given this vulnerability and given that Solon attributes to the gods the responsibility of securing the order of justice, the importance of the request for divine aid that we have explicitly in the *Elegy to the Muses* and indirectly in the *Elegy on the Polis* also becomes clear. If this reconstruction is correct, Solon's views are not contradictory but rather interesting.

7. At the beginning of this paper we compared Solon with what precedes him, that is with Hesiod. In order to better appreciate the value of his thought it is useful to compare his thought also with what follows. Indeed, it is easy to remark that justice, and the exhortation to justice, is a perennial problem for the Greeks.[50] With regard to Solon (and Hesiod), what radically changes in the following century is the belief in the inevitability of divine intervention. For Hesiod, we have seen, it was a matter of hope, whereas Solon endorsed it by appealing to the view of the hereditariness of the fault. In the subsequent decades the great challenge of the sophists will be precisely to renounce the belief in divine intervention and to accept that wrongdoers are not always

49 See Irwin 2005: 176–177, 193–196. See also fr. 4 and 15 G.-P.^{2} (= 4a and 11 W^2).

50 I discuss this problem in Bonazzi 2016.

punished; evidently the gods do not rule over the human world (see for instance, Trasymachus DK 85B8). But if this is so, it also follows that all the reasons which invite adopting just behaviour disappear. This was precisely the underlying aim of both Hesiod and Solon – to exhort their audience to follow justice – on the basis of the argument that injustice is not beneficial and will be sanctioned. But if this is not so, why should I be just, given that justice in itself is not a good and that it is not true that injustice is always punished? The temptation is rather to follow injustice, if it is more beneficial. In Solon *noos* must control *koros*, excess; in sophists such as Callicles and Thrasymachus intelligence must rather serve *koros*.[51]

The most powerful reply to such a radical challenge will come from Plato, who claims that justice is necessary for a happy life, which is what all of us aim to achieve. Plato's strategy is an interiorization of justice and other virtues, as any reader of *Republic* book IV knows. In order to be happy one must have an ordered soul, and in order to have an ordered soul one needs virtue. Virtues in general, and in particular justice, which is the most important virtue, are therefore the *sine qua non* for a happy life (that is, a successful life). What matters, in other words, is our internal (psychic) disposition, and not what happens during our life: the virtuous and just, even when tortured or killed (the reference being evidently to Socrates), will be happier than the rich and honoured unjust. This claim will be further developed by the Hellenistic philosophers, who will argue that the sage is happy even when he is on the rack, because happiness entirely depends on his virtue and on nothing else – which explains why it is beneficial to be just and virtuous.

No doubt Solon's thesis is less consistent and rigorous, when compared with the opposing views of sophists and philosophers. With the sophists, and contrary to the philosophers, he agrees that just behaviour does not necessarily secure success and happiness. But against the sophists, and with the philosophers, he insists that success and happiness can be obtained only if we are just and virtuous: even though it is not a guarantee, justice remains the only way to success. How should we evaluate his ideas within the context of these debates? For those who are looking for neat and clear solutions, Solon will probably appear not very satisfying and perhaps not coherent. But how safe is it to look for neat solutions in human matters? Many scholars, and Bernard Williams especially, have taught us that the attempt to reduce everything to a coherent and perfect system risks making many problems trivial. In other words, on this urgent problem, we face once again the quarrel between poets and philosophers. And the temptation is strong to conclude that with respect

51 See Balot 2001: 96.

to the philosophical interlocutors it was rather Solon who presented the most interesting solution, Solon who, even though he did not pretend to be able to account for everything, did not give up exhorting his fellow-citizens to follow justice in their private and public actions.

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CHAPTER 2

Plato and the 'Performative Contradiction'

Franco Trabattoni

Abstract

The advantages of the dialogical form seem to be beyond question as far as its aim is persuasion. But is the aim of dialogue persuasion only? Or, rather, does philosophical inquiry, though dialogical in form, also have the goal of demonstration? And if this is so, how can we justify a choice which clearly seems to favour the goal of persuasion over the goal of demonstration? And – finally – even if philosophy, according to Plato, cannot avoid taking part in persuasion, is there a way of granting to it also a demonstrative character? What distinguishes Platonic persuasive philosophy, on the one hand, from the mere persuasion which rhetoricians and sophists (of all times) aim at is not primarily a matter of theory. The dialogical method fragments the theory into the different characters, according to their attitudes and peculiarities. What sets the Socratic dialogue beyond the mere singularity of the characters, and thus turns it into something more than a simple matter of persuasion, consists in the fact that it starts from universally compelling questions and looks for answers tailored precisely to them. The persuasion created by sophists and rhetoricians, by contrast, is unstable and unreliable, firstly because the problems they raise are casual and far from pressing or compelling for human life; secondly, because even if sophists and rhetoricians manage in some way to discover the right problems, their answers are totally off-target, unresponsive both to the depth of the questions and the extent of their implications.

The nature and the use of the dialogical method have become, in the past decades, some of the problems most debated in Plato's philosophy. The aim of my paper is not to return to these topics, possibly suggesting a fresh approach to them. It would be rather incautious, considering the great extent of the scientific literature dealing with it. What I intend to do, instead, consists in proposing some questions, and in expounding some remarks, on the effectiveness of dialogue as a method, having in view (in this case) argumentation more than persuasion. The advantages of the dialogical form, in fact, seem to be beyond question as far as its aim is persuasion. But is the aim of dialogue persuasion only? Or, rather, does philosophical inquiry, though dialogical in

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form, also have the goal of demonstration? And if it has that goal, how can we justify a choice which clearly seems to favour the goal of persuasion over the goal of demonstration? And – finally – even if philosophy, according to Plato, cannot avoid taking part in persuasion, is there a way of granting to it also a demonstrative character?

The existence of a close link between truth and persuasion (and thus between philosophy and rhetoric) is a hallmark of my overall interpretation of Plato. According to this interpretation – which of course I cannot present here in detail[1] – a coherent understanding of Plato's system implies the acceptance of a realistic version both of the two-worlds theory and of the doctrine of recollection. But if both theories are taken, as I propose, at face-value, then the human being, at least as long as the soul is united with the body, can approach the truth only in a partial and approximate way. In other words, human beings have some access to the truth but not to the certainty of having a final possession of it. This is the reason why demonstration, which is the hallmark of certainty, must be supported by persuasion, which is the marker of a situation in which the truth has not yet been unquestionably reached.[2]

Such a mixture of demonstration and persuasion, however, risks being very dangerous for philosophy, especially if it implies that the last word is left to persuasion and not to demonstration. How is it possible, on this ground, to draw a clear-cut difference between the good persuasion of the philosopher and the bad persuasion of the sophists and rhetoricians? It seems, indeed, that dialogue is too weak to meet the truth requirements unavoidable for philosophy: its strong persuasive component rules out demonstration, and so impresses on philosophy an inescapable subjective character.

The fact that the Platonic way of arguing is incapable of producing compelling demonstrations is clearly shown by Aristotle's criticism. In Book 2, Chapter 5 of the *Posterior Analytics* (91 b 12 ff.) we find one of the passages in which Aristotle criticizes the Platonic method of *diairesis* (or division). The method of division, Aristotle writes, is not syllogistic (i.e. demonstrative); and this, for the following reason:

> There is never any necessity that the thing to be defined should be exactly what it is stated to be because the other terms of the division are so; and the method of division is even less demonstrative than induction. One ought not to ask that the conclusion should be admitted, nor ought it to be held to be true as a concession (τῷ δοῦναι), but it must necessarily

1 See Trabattoni 1994, 1998, 2005, 2016.
2 On this topics see in particular Trabattoni 2016, Chs. 3–5.

> be true if those particular premises are true, even though our companion refuses to accept it. The definer asks 'Is man animal or inanimate?' and then assumes (ἔλαβε) that man is animal and does not infer it (οὐ συλλελόγισται). (My translation).

Aristotle refers here, of course, to the method of *diairesis* as adopted by the Eleatic Stranger in both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. Actually, *diaireisis* is simply a more technical and precise way of denoting the Socratic method of questioning: since it usually compels the interlocutor to give a closed answer ("Yes" or "No"), it implicitly divides the field of possible replies into two constitutive subgroups (hence, it is by nature "diairetic"). Nor is it difficult to find in Aristotle's description precisely the kind of dialogical thinking, based on questions and answers, which Plato describes in *Theaetetus* 189 e-190 a. According to Aristotle, the flaw of the diairetic method (and hence of the method of questioning typical of Plato's Socrates) consists in the fact that it allows the interlocutor to answer as he pleases; this method does not proceed through rigorous demonstration (of the "if … then" sort), but rather by resting on the concessions of a person formulating his own opinion, which is to say on mere assumptions.

The Platonic method, in other words, is not demonstrative, since the truth it seeks to attain does not spring from the structure of the argument itself (which is to say from the interweaving of premises), but rather hangs on questioning, concession, choices made by affirming and denying, and the assumptions established by the interlocutors by mutual agreement. As Aristotle succinctly notes, if the claim "man is a living being" is held to be true as a premise to the argument simply because the replier grants his assent to it by rejecting its contradiction, then we have no syllogism (i.e. no demonstration).

But deficiency with regards to demonstrations seems far from being the only flaw of the platonic dialogue. There is, indeed, another strong criticism, namely that the conclusion of the dialogical path, since it involves no more than one particular human being at once (the one who answers the questions), must necessarily be subjective. Take for instance the following passage of the *Gorgias* (473e–474a). Socrates has just presented his thesis, according to which for the bad man it is better to pay the penalty than to avoid it. Polus replies that Socrates has utterly refuted himself, as "as nobody in the world would assent to you. You have only to ask anyone of the company here." But to Socrates all of this does not matter:

> Polus, I am not one of your statesmen: indeed, last year, when I was elected a member of the Council, and, as my tribe held the Presidency, I had

> to put a question to the vote, I got laughed at for not understanding the procedure. So do not call upon me again to take the votes of the company now; but if, as I said this moment, you have no better disproof than those, hand the work over to me in my turn, and try the sort of refutation that I think the case requires. For I know how to produce one witness in support of my statements, and that is the man himself with whom I find myself arguing; the many I dismiss: there is also one whose vote I know how to take, whilst to the multitude I have not a word to say.
>
> Transl. W.R. LAMB

It seems clear, then, that the Socratic method is decidedly weak, inasmuch it can only persuade, without demonstration, one person at a time; with the further problem that persuasion is difficult to realize and by nature unstable, so that it can vanish at any moment (making vain at once, it seems one ought to infer, the work of the Socratic philosopher).

It is possible to address these problems, I think, only by assuming as a premise that from a certain point of view the relative weakness of the dialogical method regularly adopted by Plato is nothing less and nothing more than what we could reasonably expect, as I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, from the metaphysical nature of Plato's thought, where the proper objects of philosophical knowledge are "separate" and located in an immaterial world detached from our own. However, it is not possible to stress too much the sceptical side of Plato's philosophy either, if only because a complete *sceptical* attitude would be seriously undermine Plato's strong ethical and political commitments. Thus, we are in a certain sense forced to look for a third way.[3]

My first remark is that one of the most important concerns of Plato's practice and theory of dialogue is to find a way toward rational persuasion, that is, toward persuasion based on arguments, as opposed to the low level of persuasion usually adopted by sophists and rhetoricians.[4] In other words, though

3 This is a deliberate reference to the seminal book edited by F. Gonzalez in 1995.

4 According to Plato persuasion, by itself, does not involve teaching (διδαχή, *Phdr*. 277e9) or science (ἐπιστήμη, *Gorg*. 454e4); but this does not imply that teaching and science can do without persuasion. At *Gorgias* 454e-455a Socrates identifies two types or persuasion: a *peitho didaskalikè,* which coincides with science, and a *peitho pisteutikè*, which coincides with rhetoric. Thus, science and rhetoric are species of the genus "persuasion," whereas a science detached from persuasion simply does not exist. Even what seems to be the least "rhetorical" of the sciences, mathematics, inasmuch as it "teaches," at the same time "persuades" (*Gorg*. 453e). And if it is true that *episteme* is infallible (*Gorg*. 454d, *Resp*. 477e), persuasion is not: as shown in the *Theatetus*, it is possible to go wrong even in very simple additions such as 5 + 7 = 12 (195d–196b).

philosophy too is to a certain extent a matter of persuasion, there is anyway a great difference between good persuasion and bad. That Plato's aim, at least in the later part of his career, was not so much to turn philosophy into a rigorous science, but rather to discover a way – in spite of greater and greater difficulties – to demarcate philosophy from rival arts like sophistry and rhetoric is well shown, in my opinion, by both the *Sophist* and the *Phaedrus*. Why, one could ask, in the last part of his philosophical career, does Plato go back over the discussion about the nature of sophists and rhetoricians, striving again to mark the difference between them and philosophers, if such a discussion has been settled once and for all in the early dialogues? It would be too long to deepen this point here. What is instead worth remarking, to carry on my line of reasoning, is the criterion Plato discovered in order to draw such a distinction. According to the *Phaedrus* (see in particular 278b–e), the philosopher differs from the other kind of "intellectual" not because he owns a scientific and infallible knowledge of reality, eventually liable to be stored in a written text, but because he has a virtually unlimited ability to answer the different questions levelled at him by different people (or souls, in the *Phaedrus'* language) at different times. So the philosophers are those who, so to speak, possess an undefined capacity to persuade: a capacity, as shown by the recollection story told by Socrates in his second speech of the *Phaedrus*, they have inasmuch as they are those which have retained a more vivid memory of hyperuranian reality (namely the Forms, see *Phdr*. 249b–d).

As a striking counterexample, there stands out, according to Plato, the figure of the writer and rhetorician Lysias, which not by chance plays a strong negative role in the *Phaedrus*. Let us read a funny anecdote told by Plutarch (*de garr*., 504c) about him:

> Lysias once composed a speech for a litigant and gave it to him. The man read it through a number of times and came to Lysias in despair and said that the first time he read it the speech seemed to him wonderfully good, but on taking it up a second and third time it appeared completely dull and ineffectual. "Well," said Lysias laughing, "isn't it only once that you are going to speak it before the jurors?"
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> Transl. W.C. HELMBOLD

This story stresses precisely what constitutes, for Plato, the difference between the right way to persuade and the wrong one. While the latter has as its only purpose to achieve an immediate (and ephemeral) result, such as the acquittal of the accused (in court) or the approval of the Assembly (in politics), the former aims at generate lasting persuasion, capable of withstanding, as far as possible, every attempt at refutation. The ideal target of platonic "dialogical"

dialectic is, indeed, to be able of "survive all refutations," as Socrates says in a well-known passage of the *Republic* (534c). However, the definitive realization of such an aim is far from being feasible. As Plato says in the *Seventh Letter*, in fact, the power of refutation (*elenchos*) is enormous, so that it would be misleading to ascribe all failures of reasoning to the deficiency of particular human beings; beyond each individual flaw, indeed, there is a general and natural weakness of the logos itself (343d). And it is precisely for this reason that philosophy cannot help making use of persuasion.

We can check the correctness of this picture by taking into consideration some dramatic particularities of the *Phaedo* (which is however a conclusive and rather dogmatic dialogue). The evolution of the main characters of the dialogue, namely Simmias and Cebes, is marked by the presence or absence of a wrong/ephemeral and a right/lasting (even if not everlasting) persuasion. The "philosophical" argument proposed by Socrates in order to show that the immortality of the soul results from its affinity with the divine does not succeed in persuading Simmias: there is no need for the most divine entity to be more long-lived than the entity that is less. But when Socrates points out to Simmias that this opinion is inconsistent with the doctrine of recollection he previously accepted, and then invites him to make a choice, Simmias decides without hesitation to maintain the latter and to drop the former. He explains that he adopted the soul-harmony thesis "without proof, because of a certain probability and plausibility, which is why it appeals to most men." On the contrary,

> the theory of recollection and learning … was based on an assumption worthy of acceptance, for our soul was said to exist also before it came into the body, just as the reality does that is of the kind that we qualify by the words 'what it is', and I convinced myself that I was quite correct to accept it (92d–e).
>
> Transl. GRUBE

This passage, I think, is particularly telling for the problem at issue. We find here a clear example of the two kinds of persuasion I was speaking about. The first is typical of non-philosophical *milieus* ("it appeals to most men"), and is based on a generic probability; and it is precisely for this reason that, as shown by Simmias' decision, it can produce disbelief as easily as belief. The second, on the contrary, is grounded on arguments and stems from assumptions "worthy of acceptance." This does not mean, of course, that here we are faced with an irrefutable demonstration; this does mean, instead, that we have a case of good, i.e. rational and philosophical, persuasion. But there is more. The argument from the affinity of the soul with the divine was advanced by

the "philosopher" Socrates. However, when Simmias and Cebes uncover their dissatisfaction with it, Socrates does not even attempt to defend or reinforce it. He proceeds to refute Simmias' and Cebes' objections, instead, by means of fresh arguments. This shows that the philosopher is also subject, to a certain extent, to the check of persuasion. The dissatisfaction of the interlocutors of the dialogue, as shown by the cases of Simmias and Cebes in the *Phaedo*, is not necessarily irrelevant, and on the contrary could be the mark that a certain "philosophical" argument is relatively bad, and thus needs to be replaced by something better.

The picture just outlined is confirmed, again in the *Phaedo*, in the passage in which Socrates deems "misology" the typical non-philosophical attitude (89c–d): what the philosopher ought to do, when one or more of his arguments (*logoi*) has been proved to be weak, is look again and again for a better one. All this is well summarized, I think, in the last "philosophical" page of the dialogue. The participants in the dialogue have reached substantial agreement on the immortality of the soul. This agreement coincides with philosophical persuasion grounded on arguments and assumptions worthy of acceptance (*Phaed.*, 92d). So, philosophy has attained the goal it could reasonably ask for; which is not, as we have seen, irrefutable demonstration. That such a goal has been actually obtained is suggested, moreover, by what we might call the "refutation test." Neither Simmias nor Cebes have at present in their minds arguments they think could be sound against Socrates' assessments. But this is far from saying, as Socrates himself does admit, that any reason for doubt has been removed. If those doubts become effective, Socrates suggests Simmias and Cebes go back to the "first hypotheses, which – he says – require clearer examination, even though we found them convincing. And if you analyse them adequately you will, I think, follow the argument as far as a man can, and if the conclusion is clear you will look no further" (107b).

What is Socrates really doing with this suggestion? The "first hypotheses" could hardly be something too different from the Forms, or from the rational premises for positing them. But what Socrates says can hardly be understood as if through a careful enquiry on such hypotheses, or on the Forms themselves, a way appears to overcome every doubt and reach a final truth. Firstly, Socrates does not seem to disown the domain of belief, but rather to work to improve it; secondly, he restricts the possibilities of knowledge to the human dimension; thirdly, the "clarity" that could possibly allow men to "look no further" concerns human nature and its finitude as well.[5]

5 The emphasis on the rhetorical aspects of Plato's arguments, and in particular the fact that Plato is more concerned with rational persuasion properly based on the characters taking

Let us advance, therefore, the following proposal. The dialogical framework implies, as we have seen, a good measure of subjectivity (or, still worse, arbitrariness), due to the singularities of the characters at play, upon which hangs the nature of their answers (and thus the conclusions of the dialogue). But, it is worth asking, are the questions as arbitrary as the answers? If the first hypotheses which Socrates refers to in the passage just quoted are the Forms, the Forms in their turn are the result to which the Socratic question ultimately leads. The current exposition of the Socratic question assumes that it has the form "what is X?" (where "X" in a universal notion). But sometimes in the dialogues such a question is preceded by a still more fundamental question, which asks whether a given universal notion exists or not: "Do you think that 'X' is something, or that it is nothing at all?"[6] The outcomes of Socratic dialogue seem to be subjective precisely because there are several possible answers to the classic Socratic question "what is X?," and because the possible developments of the lines of thought arising from it are still more numerous. But what about the "existential" question: "Do you think that 'X' is something, or nothing at all?" In this case we have only two possible answers, namely "yes" or "no." But the choice is not as free as one could suppose. According to Plato, the human condition implies strong commitments in favour of the affirmative answer. Firstly, answering "no" could generate problems of consistency from a practical point of view. Take for instance a person who suffered a robbery. Could such a person retain the right to say that "it is not just" (with all the ethical and juridical consequences that it is very likely he deduces from this sentence) if he thinks that "justice (as a universal notion) is nothing at all"? Isn't the possibility of predicating justice of a singular item dependant upon the existence of something like "justice" in general?

But there is more. It is striking that Parmenides, in the dialogue that bears his name, maintains that men cannot do without forms, despite the fact that the objections raised against them in the first part of the dialogue seem ruinous. Why does he act in this way? Because, as he explicitly says, whoever denies that the Forms exist "will utterly destroy the power of carrying on discussion" (*dynamis tou dialegesthai*, 135c). This passage does not mean, as some claim, that the Forms must be posited in order to assure the "power of the dialectic."[7]

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part in the dialogue than with abstract demonstration true always and for all, has been often stressed in the recent literature. See for instance Gonzalez 1998, Rowe 2007, McCoy 2008.

6 On this particular kind of the "Socratic question" see Trabattoni 2016: 59, 201–204, 247–262.

7 This is the translation, in particular, often adopted to render this sentence in the passages of the *Republic* where it occurs (511b4, 532d8). Cfr., for instance, Bloom's (Basic Books) and Grube-Reeve's (Hackett) translations, that in both cases have "power of dialectic." Other translators favour a more nuanced rendering, sometimes different in the two passages: Waterfield (OUP), "the ability to practice dialectic" (511b4), "The ability to do dialectic" (532d8); Griffith

It does mean, on the contrary, that the actual existence of dialogue, and thus of thought in general (which according to Plato is identical to it), relies on the existence of universal notions. So, if one says that "general notions do not exist," one falls into what contemporary philosophy (following Habermas and Apel) calls "perfomative contradiction."[8] In fact, you cannot consistently say that general notions do not exist, as the expression "general notion" is a general notion too. Plato in the *Sophist* implicitly ascribes to Parmenides such a contradiction. The Stranger does not really refer to what he accomplishes against Parmenides as a parricide (he says: "Do not assume that I am becoming a sort of parricide," 241d) precisely because the existence of some not-being is implied in Parmenides' own words: though he warns, indeed, that not-being could be neither thought nor said, he clearly thinks and speak of it in his poem. So he falls into the performative contradiction. And maybe it is not a coincidence that the Platonic character "Parmenides" is careful not to fall into the same error.

But let us get back to the "question of the existence (of the universal notion)" and let us admit that the negative answer is too onerous for the reasons just expounded (we would fall into both a practical and performative contradiction). The next step is to ask how demanding an affirmative answer is, and to uncover all the consequences implied in it. Plato's opinion (and, if my suggestion is correct, Socrates' opinion when in the *Phaedo* he urges his interlocutors to examine the first hypothesis) is that the affirmation involves significant commitments and that its consequences go very far. If the actual existence of universal notions is admitted and if what it really does mean is taken thoroughly into consideration, one can nearly say that the essential components of "Platonism" are already in place (it seems no a coincidence, after all, that the antimetaphysical attitude of such a great part of contemporary thought is moved precisely against the "platonic" universal[9]).

We can say, to conclude, that what distinguishes Platonic persuasive philosophy, on the one hand, from the mere persuasion at which which rhetoricians

(CUP): "power to conduct a rational discourse," "power of dialectique"; Chambry (Belle Lettre), "puissance dialéctique," "faculté du dialecticien"; Sartori (Laterza), "potere dialettico," "modo della facoltà dialettica"; Vegetti (BUR): "potenza del discorrere dialettico," "potenza della dialettica" In general, while some translators are willing to mitigate the rendering of *dynamis* from "power" to "capacity" and so on, the great majority of them choose to connects *dialegesthai* to the *techne* (practice or science) of dialectics (and the owner of it) rather to the more general activity of discussing. The translation closer to my interpretation is the French one by G. Leroux (GF): "force du dialogue," "capacité du dialogue."

8 On the performative contradiction see Roversi 2010: 223–251, where a careful history of the genesis and development of the notion, including references to Apel's and Habermas's works, can be found.

9 From Heidegger 1967 to G. Deleuze's 1967 and beyond.

and sophists (of all times) aim at is not primarily a matter of theories. The dialogical method, indeed, fragments the theory into the different characters, according to their attitudes and peculiarities. The last proof of the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, for instance, is not an impersonal and general demonstration, effectual for all and forever. It is, instead, the refutation of Cebes' objection; and as far as its soundness is concerned, all we can say is that it has been found persuasive, and only temporarily, by Simmias and Cebes. What sets the Socratic dialogue beyond the mere singularity of the characters, and thus turns it into something more than a simple matter of persuasion, consists in the fact that it starts from universally compelling questions and looks for answers tailored precisely to them. The persuasion created by sophists and rhetoricians, by contrast, is unstable and unreliable, firstly because the problems they raise are casual and far from pressing or compelling for human life; secondly, because even if sophists and rhetoricians manage in some way to discover the right problems, their answers are totally off-target, as unresponsive both to the depth of the questions and the extent of their implications.

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CHAPTER 3

Self-knowledge and Politics in the *Alcibiades I*

Albert Joosse

Abstract

This paper offers a case for recognizing the *Alcibiades I* as a contribution to political philosophy. In so doing, it also shows that the dialogue is much more unified than it is usually considered to be in the scholarly literature. The paper focuses on the connection between two passages: the apparently aporetic passage of 124e1–127d5, in which Socrates questions Alcibiades about the content of political expertise; and Socrates' exhortation to Alcibiades to get to know himself as his soul (127e9–133c6). The section on self-knowledge provides central conceptual tools that help us articulate the political philosophy that is implicit in the aporetic passage. First, knowledge of one's humanity is key to politics, understood as an expertise that has people as its proper object. Second, politics deals with human beings qua human beings, not in accidental specialisations. Third, the section on self-knowledge instantiates political rule in the conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades. Fourth, the later section helps resolve the dilemma between friendship as unanimity and friendship as justice that brought 124e-127d to its aporetic close. Finally, the combination of the two passages yields two scenarios of political rule: one of education and one of cooperation. It shows, in essence, what is involved in Alcibiades' description of politics as an expertise that deals with people: it is rule of fellow rulers.

The Platonic *Alcibiades I* is well known as a protreptic text *par excellence* and contains a classic argument for the Platonic view that human beings are identical with their souls. In this paper I offer a case for reappraising this dialogue as contributing to political philosophy. I argue that there is an important connection between, on the one hand, the famous passage in which Socrates urges Alcibiades to get to know himself as his soul (127e9–133c6) and, on the other hand, an earlier, apparently aporetic passage in which Socrates questions Alcibiades about the content of political expertise (124e1–127d5). As I hope to show, the later passage contains essential concepts and arguments for solving the puzzles that at first prove insuperable for Alcibiades in the earlier passage. If my interpretation is plausible, the dialogue provides a positive view of what politics should be. A secondary implication of my interpretation is that the dialogue is much more unified than it is usually considered to be in the scholarly literature.

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I will proceed as follows. After a brief overview of the dialogue (Part I), I will discuss some of the problems of argument and composition that scholars have identified in the text (Part II). In particular, I will consider a well-known attempt to demonstrate the unity of the *Alcibiades I*, offered by Julia Annas in 1985. Annas convincingly argues that the theme of self-knowledge is the guiding thread that unites the dialogue. Even Annas's article, however, does not provide a meaningful connection between the abortive account of politics given in Stephanus pages 124e1–127d5 (a part of the text to which I will refer as "the political section") and the rest of the dialogue. Next, I analyse this political section in more detail (Part III). I then turn to the climactic passage of the dialogue (127e9–133c6), in which Socrates attempts to demonstrate to Alcibiades that he is identical with the best aspect of his soul. I will argue that this passage helps us to solve the difficulties treated in Part III and allows us to sketch the resulting view, the political philosophy which Socrates offers to Alcibiades (Part IV).

Let me make two preliminary remarks before turning to the text. First, I make no assumptions about, nor will I address, the issue of the dialogue's authenticity.[1] Second, the connections between this dialogue and other texts in the corpus are many. I have omitted reference to them in order to focus on the internal coherence of this dialogue.

1 The *Alcibiades I*

The *Alcibiades I* opens when Socrates expresses to Alcibiades his conjecture, which turns out to be true, that Alcibiades is amazed at Socrates' speaking to him only now, after having followed him for years, at a time when all the other lovers of Alcibiades have left. The reason for this behaviour, Socrates explains, is that Alcibiades is only now susceptible to the message that he cannot realise his enormous political ambitions – to rule the whole world – without Socrates. Socrates first shows that Alcibiades has no knowledge of politics, specifically of the themes about which the Athenian assembly deliberates. This is true regardless of whether Alcibiades identifies the topic of deliberation as justice or as what is advantageous – Socrates shows that these are in fact the same. When Alcibiades is finally convinced that he is indeed ignorant, he still proves resistent to Socrates' attempts to improve him. He objects that other Athenians

1 An overview of the debate about the dialogue's authenticity is provided in Jirsa 2009. The tendency in recent scholarship is to accept it; some evidence of this is that the four commentaries on the dialogue published in the last twenty years, in French (Marbœuf and Pradeau 1999), English (Johnson 1996, Denyer 2001) and German (Döring 2016), all judge in favour of authenticity. (This evidence is possibly skewed, as defenders of authenticity might be more inclined to devote a commentary to the text.)

also lack political knowledge and that his natural advantages will allow him to get the better of them. He is even prepared to assert his equality with the Spartans and Persians in terms of birth and possessions. Socrates counters with a speech about the lineage, wealth, and education of the Spartan and Persian heirs to the throne. These foreign princes are in fact so superior that Alcibiades' only chance at vanquishing them rests in the Greek excellences of care and craft. Socrates ends the speech by saying that Alcibiades should "know himself" (124a8–b1) and realise that the Spartans and Persians are his real rivals if he wants to rule the world, not other Athenians. Alcibiades now seems convinced that he must improve himself and asks Socrates how this must be done. Socrates then invites Alcibiades to identify the excellence which he wants to attain and, when Alcibiades turns out to be unable to do this, Alcibiades again admits his ignorance and his need for improvement. Socrates finally turns to the correct method of self-care and presents self-knowledge as a prerequisite for this. They identify a human being with his soul, and Socrates describes an analogy between an eye that sees itself in the eye of another and a soul that gains knowledge of itself in a soul. Socrates identifies this knowledge with σωφροσύνη and argues that this is necessary for happiness, both for Alcibiades and for the city. The dialogue ends with Alcibiades' vow to follow Socrates and Socrates' fear that the city may prove too strong for them.[2]

2 Problems of Composition

In an influential 1985 article, Julia Annas suggested that the unifying theme of the *Alcibiades I* is that of self-knowledge. Against evaluations of the dialogue as "philosophically a mess", or "a string of unconnected parts",[3] Annas claims that the idea of self-knowledge, once properly understood as one's knowledge of one's place in the world, allows us better to see the philosophical unity of the text. Let us first look at the main points of disunity which she detects in the dialogue before offering her own proposal for unifying these.

There are three striking features about the *Alcibiades I* if we compare it to other "early" dialogues.[4] First, we should be surprised that part of what Socrates objects to in Alcibiades' ignorance is his ignorance of circumstances in Sparta and Persia, which Socrates sets out in his long exhortative speech (121a3–124b6). Usually with Socrates, it is not "facts" like these of which his

2 On the biography and ancient reputation of Alcibiades himself see Gribble 1999.

3 Annas 1985: 115.

4 This is how Annas refers to them (1985: 117), I prefer to make no claim as to the dating of the dialogue and its setting in the corpus.

interlocutors are blamefully ignorant, but ethical values or conditions.[5] A second oddity is that, "once Alcibiades admits that he needs to learn, we return abruptly to the theme of politics, and an unexpected dilemma is thrust on us (124d-127d)" (1985: 117). The dilemma is between describing good government as the presence of friendship, and therefore agreement (ὁμόνοια) in the state, and describing it as a condition in which all citizens do their own things (τὰ αὑτῶν πράττουσι).

> Surprisingly, Socrates retorts that these two notions are actually in conflict: for insofar as people mind *their own* concerns they have no basis for agreement with others. [...] the conclusion is in fact clearly outrageous, and it is hard to believe that Socrates is actually committed to it (1985: 117–118).

Annas suggests that the passage is best read as an invitation to clarify the relation between agreement and doing one's own things, but thinks the passage and the dilemma are still out of place here.

The third "surprising" element of the dialogue Annas notes is that self-knowledge is presented as the remedy to Alcibiades' poor condition. We would rather have expected an exhortation to learn about justice and prudence, not about himself (118).

Annas proposes to resolve these difficulties by first clarifying the nature of self-knowledge in this text. She emphasises the distance that separates a modern conception of self-knowledge that would involve introspection and would consist in knowledge of one's individual personality, on the one hand, from an ancient understanding which makes self-knowledge an awareness of one's place in society, on the other: "knowledge of who I am already presupposes a correct appraisal of my relations to others" (121). In her interpretation, it is the latter conception of which Plato aims to give a more profound account.

If we have accepted this correction to our view of what self-knowledge is, Annas argues, we will be able to see how the three surprising elements of the dialogue can be reconciled with the text's central theme of self-knowledge. Alcibiades' lack of knowledge about Spartan and Persian affairs directly impinges on his self-understanding as an ambitious politician (122). This is an ignorance of others that implies an ignorance of himself. The theme of self-knowledge thus accounts for the first difficulty.

Self-knowledge also accounts for the second difficulty, Annas claims. Once we understand that it involves a more objective knowledge of one's place in

5 De Strycker, arguing against the authenticity of *Alc. I*, voices a broadly shared view in older scholarship in evaluating the speech as too long to be Platonic (in Bidez 1945: 107–109).

society, it will easily be seen that it also includes a knowledge of what is due to others. Hence, this self-knowledge is plausibly identified with justice: "it can easily come to seem natural to regard the virtue of *sôphrosunê*, interpreted as rightly understanding one's place, as being the same virtue as the virtue of justice, giving others what is due to them. So Alcibiades has not been side-tracked" (123–124).

The third oddity which Annas detected, that self-knowledge, of all things, is presented as the cure to Alcibiades' ignorance of politics and justice, can be explained and integrated once we properly see self-knowledge as the "inner aspect" of a virtue of which justice is the "outer aspect" (126). By getting to know himself, Alcibiades will also get to know what is due to others.[6]

I agree with Annas that the ancient understanding of self-knowledge involves a much more objectivist view than modern ideas about individual personality and the individual subconscious. She must be right to maintain that this makes it *prima facie* plausible that moral improvement can start out from self-knowledge. The speech about Spartans and Persians can also be integrated into this perspective as a demonstration of Alcibiades' lack of knowledge about the external conditions that are relevant to his political ambitions.

The second oddity which Annas detects, however – the dilemma between agreement and justice – is far from being resolved by Annas' account of self-knowledge. The connection that Annas sees between self-knowledge and justice is insufficient to explain why Socrates constructs such a remarkable conflict between agreement and justice, or between friendship and justice. The fact that justice is a theme is in itself not surprising, since it is already present in the previous conversation (cf. 109a5–112d6), so of course Alcibiades has not been "side-tracked" as far as a discussion of justice goes. The surprising element is the artificial-looking dilemma which Socrates constructs. Annas's interpretation does not help the reader to resolve this dilemma or to explain its presence.

Apart from the possible fissures to which Annas draws our attention, the composition of the *Alcibiades I* may also be criticised as disjointed on other counts. Two aspects in particular deserve separate mention. First, the ending of the dialogue seems suddenly to lose interest in the self-knowledge that was so central only a few pages earlier. Socrates exhorts Alcibiades to pursue virtue, but he does not specify this as self-knowledge: it seems to be a generic

6 Annas continues her article by arguing that Plato deepens this objective understanding of self-knowledge by identifying it as one's knowledge of oneself as an "impersonal self" (131). The interpretation of the passage in which Plato spells out the full extent of self-knowledge remains controversial, but for now it is enough to observe that this further interpretation of Annas' does not add to her argument about the compositorial unity of the dialogue. Tsouna 2001: 51 follows Annas' reading but adds reservations about her elimination of individuality.

exhortation to virtue. This is odd, since Alcibiades is willing to pursue virtue from the very beginning; the whole business of describing self-knowledge seems unnecessary to reaching this conclusion. And if it is specifically self-knowledge which Socrates wants Alcibiades to reach for, why would he exhort him to pursue virtue generally? Furthermore, Alcibiades vows to pursue justice, but has Socrates not just demonstrated to him that an aspiring politician first needs self-knowledge?

Second, Socrates' treatment of Alcibiades seems unduly harsh and unreasonable. After the long section about Alcibiades' ignorance of justice and of what is advantageous (106c4–116e1), Alcibiades admits to his ignorance for the first time (116e2–4). Then, after the speech, Alcibiades has also come to accept the need for self-improvement. This, one would think, puts him into exactly the position where Socrates wants him: aware of his ignorance and motivated to do something about it. Why then does Socrates follow up by means of another elenctic conversation?[7] The dilemma between agreement and justice with which it ends is surprising, as Annas underlines, but the very presence of another elenctic section of the dialogue itself needs explanation. The section once more demonstrates Alcibiades' ignorance of politics, and indeed ends, once more, with Alcibiades' admission of ignorance and his willingness to be improved (127d6–8). Isn't this refutation for refutation's sake?

3 Identifying the Political Art

In order to evaluate what role this second elenctic section plays within the whole of the dialogue, let us first analyse its contents and arguments.[8] When Alcibiades has realised that he is ignorant and Socrates has in addition managed to convince him that he needs to do something about this ignorance, Alcibiades expresses his wish to learn from Socrates what method of improvement he should adopt. Socrates, however, directs this question back to Alcibiades.[9]

7 Renaud and Tarrant 2015 say: "The aim of the argument is presumably not to teach some positive knowledge to Alcibiades, but to shatter what is left of his conceit" (55). In a more general vein, De Strycker faults the dialogue for its episodic argumentation, which he compares to a chain of separately welded rings (in Bidez 1945: 112–113). Döring (2016: 124) claims that the questions of this section are "im weiteren Verlauf des Dialogs nicht wieder aufgegriffen."

8 In seeing an important substantive contribution in this section, I am following the lead of Olympiodorus, who, in his commentary on the *Alcibiades I*, offers a four-cause analysis of politics on the basis of this passage (177.19–180.10). The theory may derive from Iamblichus (see O'Meara 2003: 55).

9 As Döring observes, Socrates fends off Alcibiades' direct plea for instruction with words that echo Alcibiades' reluctance to admit to his need for improvement earlier: κοινὴ βούλη (119b1, 124b10, Döring 2016: 114).

He claims that he is just as much in need of improvement as Alcibiades and encourages him to think about the excellence which they want to attain: what excellence is this? In his attempt to give a description of it, and under Socrates' questioning, Alcibiades proposes a whole string of answers.

Alcibiades first responds in terms of the people who have the excellence that he has in mind. He first says that he wants to have the excellence of "good men" (οἱ ἄνδρες οἱ ἀγαθοί, 124e4). Socrates wants to know who these good men are, of course, since this is a fairly general and, though formally surely correct, uninformative description. Alcibiades supplies the specification that he means the people who get things done (οἱ πράττειν τὰ πράγματα, 124e6). This too obviously calls for specification: "what things?" asks Socrates (124e7), and who are the people that do them? (124e15).[10] Alcibiades responds: the things that Athenian gentlemen do (ἅπερ Ἀθηναίων οἱ καλοὶ κἀγαθοί, 124e16). Socrates (who perhaps senses that Alcibiades won't on his own be able to offer a descriptively more specific designation) proposes an equivalence between the phrase "gentlemen" and one or the other of the pair "intelligent"/"foolish" (φρόνιμοι/ἄφρονες, 125a1–3). Alcibiades of course chooses "intelligent".

Despite the initial promise of this new formulation, it soon falls victim to the same worry of generality: we still need to specify the things about which these people are intelligent. As Socrates shows by means of an example, a shoemaker too can be said to be intelligent, because he is intelligent with respect to making shoes. Calling these good people whose excellence Alcibiades wishes to have "intelligent" seems therefore no more helpful in identifying this excellence than the other attempts. Alcibiades then gives a response that paves the way for a different type of answer. He says that he means the excellence of the people who have the power to rule in the city (τοὺς δυναμένους ἄρχειν ἐν τῇ πόλει, 125b9).

Thus far, then, Alcibiades has identified the excellence which he and Socrates want to acquire in terms of the people who have this excellence (I have completed these from the more elliptical versions in the text).

Specification of the desired excellence in terms of people who have this excellence:

(1) the excellence of good men.
(2) the excellence of those who get things done.

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10 Döring (2016: 117) observes that it is odd that Socrates does not wait for the answer to his first ("what") question before posing the second ("who"). Döring himself interprets this in view of Socrates' proposal in 125a1–3 and his desire to distinguish between the actual knowledge of actual rulers and the knowledge rulers ought to have. Whatever the reason, Socrates does keep the focus here on the identity of the people who have the excellence which Alcibiades desires.

(3) the excellence of those who do the things that Athenian gentlemen do.
(4) the excellence of those who do the things that intelligent people do.
(5) the excellence of those with the power to rule in the city.

Each of these can be viewed as an answer in terms of the people who have this excellence, although the specifications of who these people are are also increasingly informative about the excellence itself. None of these answers convinces Socrates, however, because he does not find them specific enough. In connection with the last answer, (5), for instance, he points out that other crafts also "rule" things. So the questions turn towards the object of the excellence that Alcibiades wants to attain, and specifically towards the objects of the rule which Alcibiades mentioned in answer (5).

Alcibiades first identifies human beings (not horses) as the relevant objects of this rule (125b12). This too is open to many different specifications, as Socrates' next questions imply: the rule Alcibiades means to refer to is probably not that over sick people, *qua* sick, or over sailors, etcetera. Faced with the pair of alternatives that Socrates offers him – is this rule a rule over people who do something or over people who do not do anything? – Alcibiades understandably chooses the more active of these two (τι ποιούντων, 125c2). But *what* do these people do? Alcibiades ventures the following answer: they associate together and deal with each other (συμβαλλόντων ἑαυτοῖς καὶ χρωμένων ἀλλήλοις, 125c4–7), adding: "the way we live in cities". The addition in particular shows something of Alcibiades' attempt to make Socrates see what he has in mind without having to spell it out completely in descriptive terms: you know, that which we do in politics![11] But Socrates is unwilling to go along with this implicit construction of politics. Once more he presses the literal meaning of Alcibiades' answer: do you mean rule by boatsmen who deal with rowers? Or rule by flute-players who deal with members of the choir? Captains and choirmasters too, it turns out, manage people who communicate with and command other people. In other words, the description is still not specific enough (125c9–d4). Alcibiades tries to meet Socrates' demands by saying that the relevant objects of this rule are people who share in the πολιτεία and who come into contact with each other (κοινωνούντων πολιτείας καὶ συμβαλλόντων πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 125d7–8). It is an answer that still does not satisfy Socrates.[12]

11 This (unsuccessful) appeal to shared background knowledge would also explain why Alcibiades starts his answer with οὐκοῦν τῶν, which is the unanimous MS reading. Denyer 2001 *ad loc.* emends to συνόντων, Döring 2016: 119 n. 183 to ὁμιλούντων.

12 I will return to these expressions below (page numbers 47–48).

The four answers that Alcibiades has given in terms of the objects of the expertise and more specifically of the rule which he aims for, have become increasingly dense without achieving descriptive precision.

Specification of the desired excellence in terms of the objects of this expertise:
(6) the excellence of those with the power to rule human beings.
(7) the excellence of those with the power to rule human beings who do something.
(8) the excellence of those with the power to rule human beings who are in contact with one another and deal with each other.
(9) the excellence of those with the power to rule people who share in the πολιτεία and who come into contact with each other.

These descriptions, which we can complete on the basis of Alcibiades' partial answers in the text and the specifications that came before, become longer and longer, not to say more and more tortuous. Yet Socrates still does not find the answers specific enough. Moreover, Alcibiades ends up repeating himself (συμβαλλόντων ἑαυτοῖς, 125c4 ~ συμβαλλόντων πρὸς ἀλλήλους, 125d7–8). Socrates marks this repetition by again (after (9) as after (8)) mentioning the expertise of captains and choir-masters as possible analogies for Alcibiades' target expertise.

Socrates seems to make a fresh start by asking for the name of this craft, and Alcibiades mentions "good judgement" (εὐβουλία, 125e6). Once more they turn to the object of the craft, since, as Socrates points out, there are many kinds of εὐβουλία, different kinds suited to different crafts (including the by now inevitable expertise of captains). So merely saying "εὐβουλία" won't help us identify what we are looking for. Alcibiades now has a helpful idea, however. He notes that captains do not just exercise good judgement, but they exercise good judgement with a view to the preservation and safe passage of their crew (126a1). Socrates encourages this line of thought and invites Alcibiades to specify the aim with respect to which the expertise they are seeking exercises good judgement. It is with a view to the better management and preservation of the city, Alcibiades responds (εἰς τὸ ἄμεινον τὴν πόλιν διοικεῖν καὶ σῴζεσθαι, 126a4).

Alcibiades' mention of a "better" kind of management of the city almost begs for the follow-up question of what better management would lead to: what condition will the city be in when it is managed better? In other words, we may add (although Socrates doesn't): what is the good of the city? Alcibiades responds in terms that take the discussion in a new direction: the city is managed better when friendship comes to be in it and *stasis* or inner conflict is absent from it (ὅταν φιλία μὲν αὐτοῖς γίγνηται πρὸς ἀλλήλους, τὸ μισεῖν δὲ καὶ στασιάζειν

ἀπογίγνηται, 126c1–3). φιλία and στάσις are recognisable items from the lexicon of fifth- and fourth-century political discourse, so we understand what sort of thing Alcibiades is thinking of. Socrates seems to understand this too, by inviting Alcibiades to identify φιλία with either agreement or discord (ὁμόνοια or διχόνοια, 126c4). Alcibiades chooses agreement, as was to be expected. It now turns out, however, that Socrates does not just appeal to contemporary political discourse: he wants to account for agreement in terms of knowledge. On the analogy of agreement about mathematical relations, which results from people's shared knowledge of mathematics, he wants Alcibiades to specify a kind of knowledge that functions as the source of the agreement which Alcibiades has supposed to be present in a well-managed city (126c6–d7).

Instead of supplying a kind of knowledge that produces agreement in a relevantly political sense, however, Alcibiades refers to analogies from the domain of family relationships. He mentions three such analogies: the agreement between parents and their son, the agreement between brothers, and the agreement between husband and wife (126e2–4). Socrates focuses on the latter relationship and argues that it is impossible that there be agreement between husband and wife, at least if we also suppose that men and women have different domains of expertise and that agreement is, as they agreed before, the product of shared knowledge (126e5–127b6). It would seem to follow that there won't be friendship in such a situation either, since friendship was identified with agreement.

Alcibiades wants to push in the other direction, however. In his view, if people act within their own domains, this produces friendship (127b7–11). This view conflicts with his earlier account of friendship as agreement and of agreement as the result of shared knowledge, as Socrates is quick to point out (127c1–4). However, Socrates also offers Alcibiades a way to defend his new intuition by describing the situation in which each person performs his own tasks and does not meddle in the affairs of others as a just situation: each does what is just by doing his own work and his own duty. And a city in which justice reigns will also be a city of friendship, they say (127c5–10).

Specification of the desired excellence in terms of the goal of the expertise:
(10) good judgement.
(11) good judgement towards the better management of the city.
(12) good judgement towards friendship in the city.
(13) good judgement towards agreement in the city.
(14) good judgement towards a division of labour in the city / justice.

Socrates uses the last three of these answers (12–14) to construct a dilemma which brings Alcibiades to his second admission of ignorance. I will consider

the details of this dilemma presently, but would first like to make two general comments on the whole set of answers.

First, Alcibiades uses language that fellow Athenians would normally have recognised as belonging to the sphere of politics. Phrases and words like ἄνδρες οἱ ἀγαθοί, πράττειν τὰ πράγματα, καλοὶ κἀγαθοί, ἄρχειν, and εὐβουλία are perfectly ordinary designations for political actors and processes. The trouble is that they seem to derive their political sense from a vague agreement as to what politics is, one that narrows their meaning as compared to their literal sense. But what politics is is the very question they are discussing. And so, in his attempt to establish what politics is, Socrates *does* take these terms and phrases overly literally.[13]

Second, in considering (4), after the equation of ἀγαθός and φρόνιμος, Socrates points to the restricted, object-determined scope of being intelligent. A shoemaker is intelligent with respect to making shoes but not with respect to making clothes. Therefore he is good at making shoes but not at making clothes. We can call this a principle of "partial goodness". As a consequence, the same person can be both good and bad (125b3–4). With this result in hand, Socrates asks Alcibiades: Does this assessment also hold of the people you call good? (125b6). Alcibiades' rejection of this consequence constitutes an important restriction on the expertise that Socrates and Alcibiades are looking for. It must be an expertise that makes you not merely partially good.[14]

Let us now zoom in again on answers 12–14. We have seen that Alcibiades' identification of the presence of φιλία and the absence of στάσις as the good condition of the city leads to the further identification of this good condition with ὁμόνοια (126c4). This substitution allows Socrates to return to his question about the object of knowledge, since agreement about something results from knowledge of that thing.

As we also saw, Alcibiades cannot really supply the relevant object, but instead provides another circumscription of ὁμόνοια that does not identify the object of knowledge:

13 For the contrast between the ordinary meanings of these terms and Socrates' treatment of them see also Döring 2016: 116–120.

14 Döring (2016: 118) interprets Alcibiades' rejection as a straightforward failure to see Socrates' illicit elision of a clause of respect. On this interpretation, no substantive criterion for political excellence results.

> I think I mean the friendship and agreement with respect to which a father who loves his son is of one mind with him, as well as the mother, and a brother with a brother and a wife with her husband (126e2–4).[15]

In other words, Alcibiades appeals to the well-known paradigm of family relationships for political reality and for different constitutional systems.

It is the differentiation of social roles implied in the analogy, and especially in the first and the last pairs of the analogy, which provides Socrates with the material to construct his dilemma. On the basis of the intuition that there are specifically female branches of knowledge, like weaving, and specifically male branches of knowledge, like warfare, he argues that men and women do not have ὁμόνοια. And therefore there cannot be φιλία between them:

> Insofar as the women do what's theirs (τὰ αὑτῶν πράττουσιν), they are not loved by their husbands [and *vice versa*]. So neither will cities be well-managed this way, when each does what is theirs? – Oh but I *do* think they will, Socrates. […] It seems to me that there will also be friendship between people in this respect, that each does their own things (127a14–b11).[16]

Alcibiades, it turns out, also has the intuition that a differentiation of tasks *does* produce φιλία: a city will be peaceful when each does his own job. Socrates spells this out for him by introducing the terminology of justice. To act justly is to do one's own things. And if there is justice in the city, there will also be φιλία in the city.

So it looks like Alcibiades is working with two conceptions of φιλία: one that requires ὁμόνοια, one that excludes it. He will therefore have to choose between ὁμόνοια and justice. This dilemma then brings Alcibiades to a second admission of ignorance:

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15 Ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι φιλίαν τε λέγειν καὶ ὁμόνοιαν, ἥνπερ πατήρ τε ὑὸν φιλῶν ὁμονοεῖ καὶ μήτηρ, καὶ ἀδελφὸς ἀδελφῷ καὶ γυνὴ ἀνδρί. My translation, here and throughout.

16 Ἧι ἄρα αἱ γυναῖκες τὰ αὑτῶν πράττουσιν, οὐ φιλοῦνται ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνδρῶν. – Οὐκ ἔοικεν. – Οὐδ' ἄρα οἱ ἄνδρες ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικῶν ᾗ τὰ αὑτῶν. – Οὔ. – Οὐδ' εὖ ἄρα ταύτῃ οἰκοῦνται αἱ πόλεις, ὅταν τὰ αὑτῶν ἕκαστοι πράττωσιν; – Οἶμαι ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες. – Πῶς λέγεις, φιλίας μὴ παρούσης, ἧς ἔφαμεν ἐγγιγνομένης εὖ οἰκεῖσθαι τὰς πόλεις, ἄλλως δ' οὔ; – Ἀλλά μοι δοκεῖ καὶ κατὰ τοῦτ' αὐτοῖς φιλία ἐγγίγνεσθαι, ὅτι τὰ αὑτῶν ἑκάτεροι πράττουσιν.

> By the gods, Socrates, I don't even know myself what I mean, and I bet I haven't noticed that I was in a most shameful condition all along (127d6–8).[17]

4 Self-knowledge and Alcibiades' Political Philosophy

This second admission of ignorance is often seen as marking a new beginning in the conversation. This impression can be seen as being reinforced by Socrates' response to Alcibiades, in which he says that Alcibiades must remain confident and that he is of exactly the right age to become aware of his ignorance and to start taking care of himself. And indeed, Socrates *does* seem to start a new investigation when he asks:

> Come then, what is it to take care of oneself (τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι) – so that it may not escape our notice that we are not taking care of ourselves, although we think we do – and when does a human being do this? When he takes care of what is his, does he then also take care of himself? (127e9–128a3).[18]

As an investigation of selfhood and self-care, this section *can* to some extent be read separately from the previous section. In so doing, however, we obscure the unity of this dialogue, and specifically the way in which the investigation of self-knowledge furnishes central conceptual tools to resolve the dilemma which Socrates constructs with answers (12)-(14) above. Reading the section on self-knowledge in isolation also makes it less clear why at the end of the dialogue, Socrates seems to think that self-knowledge will equip Alcibiades for politics, not just as a prerequisite for, but as constitutive of political knowledge.

So what happens in this section on self-knowledge? Alcibiades and Socrates first set out to discover "what we ourselves are" as opposed to what belongs to us. This then leads to the argument that is supposed to show that human beings are identical with their souls. When we speak of knowing "oneself", we speak of knowing the soul. Alcibiades, consequently, should take care of his soul if he wants to take care of himself. This famous argument (which is actually a double argument, supplied in two versions) is couched in terms of "rule"

17 Ἀλλὰ μὰ τοὺς θεούς, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐδ' αὐτὸς οἶδ' ὅτι λέγω, κινδυνεύω δὲ καὶ πάλαι λεληθέναι ἐμαυτὸν αἴσχιστα ἔχων.

18 Φέρε δή, τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι – μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ – καὶ πότ' ἄρα αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπος; ἆρ' ὅταν τῶν αὑτοῦ ἐπιμελῆται, τότε καὶ αὑτοῦ;

(ἄρχειν) and "use" (χρῆσθαι), with the soul as the item that rules or uses the body (129e9–130a4). Two consequences follow from this identification of human beings with their souls: acknowledged experts like doctors and trainers turn out not to know themselves, because their knowledge concerns the body. And Socrates turns out to be the only real lover of Alcibiades, because he loves his soul and not his body. The section ends when Socrates gives a more precise account of what self-care and self-knowledge are, through the famous analogy between self-knowledge and self-seeing, when an eye sees itself as reflected in the eye of another. Souls must also engage in self-reflection and will in doing so discover that their essence is thought, φρόνησις (133b7–c6).

How might this section fit with the previous, politically oriented one? I would like to describe four possible connections and then discuss a terminological and conceptual correspondence that may prove illuminating. First, in getting to know himself, Alcibiades is answering the question "what is a human being". This is obviously so because he is himself a human being, but the questions are also put in terms of "human beings". If we remind ourselves that Alcibiades has described the excellence he wants to attain as the ability to rule people who deal with people, we can begin to see that this anthropological investigation helps to specify what politics is. So insofar as human beings are the object of the expertise of ruling that Alcibiades and Socrates were seeking in the political section, this expertise of self-knowledge is also at least part of what it takes to be a politician. We get the same result if we apply the concept of care. When Socrates advances the requirement that you must know something in order to care for it, this applies to political caring just as much as to self-care. Of course Alcibiades' first priority is himself, because it is he who is in bad shape. But political rule will be care for one's subjects. Improvement of one's fellow citizens will therefore presuppose knowledge of what they are: knowledge of their humanity.

A second and related point concerns the difficulty of identifying politics. We saw that earlier in the dialogue Alcibiades struggles to give an identifying description of the political art. The terms he proposes are more deictic than descriptive. He finds it difficult to identify a *specific* domain with which politics is concerned. Also, this has to be an excellence which is not subject to the problem of partial goodness. Now we see that self-knowledge can deliver this: it is hard to specify a domain for it because it is concerned with the essence of human beings, not with accidental specialisations. And the excellence of self-knowledge also preserves goodness: you are good as that which you are, *qua* human being.

Third, the mechanism of self-care which Socrates describes in the analogy of eyes and souls can be seen as an instantiation of political rule. Socrates is

making Alcibiades better in respect of his soul, i.e. in respect of what he is. Alcibiades is supposed to do the same, as Socrates goes on to say:

> If you are to conduct the affairs of the city correctly and well, you will have to give the citizens participation in excellence (134b11–c1).[19]

Alcibiades, it seems, will have to play the part of Socrates with respect to the city.[20] It is only by orienting themselves towards φρόνησις and wisdom, Socrates argues, that both Alcibiades and the city "will discern and know yourselves and your goods" (134d7–8). So this is what rule really looks like: making the citizens know themselves and in that way realise what is good for them.

Fourth, the account of self-knowledge allows us to resolve the dilemma between agreement and justice. Let us start with the second concept, justice. Alcibiades had thought that there would be justice, and therefore friendship, in the city when people stuck to their particular social roles. They have distinct domains of activity which are "their things". But in fact, only through knowledge of yourself will you know what is yours and what belongs to what is yours (these *depend* on the former). As Socrates puts it:

> We were completely wrong to agree just now that there are some who don't know themselves but do know what is theirs [e.g. doctors who know the body], and others who know what belongs to what is theirs [e.g. farmers who know food, which belongs to the body]. For it seems to be the preserve of one person and of one craft to discern all of these: oneself, what is one's own, and what belongs to what is one's own (133d10–e2).[21]

How can Socrates claim this? An intermediate step is provided by the principle which he submits for Alcibiades' approval immediately after the identification of self-knowledge:

19 Εἰ δὴ μέλλεις τὰ τῆς πόλεως πράξειν ὀρθῶς καὶ καλῶς, ἀρετῆς σοι μεταδοτέον τοῖς πολίταις.

20 Werner 2013 offers a helpful tripartition of reflections in the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades: one of mimetic irony in which Socrates adapts his discourse to Alcibiades' current state, a second in which Alcibiades can observe his own statements and feelings in response to Socrates' questions, and a third in which Socrates serves as a model for Alcibiades to imitate (319–320). On the mirror motif in the dialogue cf. Joosse 2018: 33–36.

21 Οὐκ ἄρα πάνυ τι ὀρθῶς ὡμολογοῦμεν ὁμολογοῦντες ἄρτι εἶναί τινας οἳ ἑαυτοὺς μὲν οὐ γιγνώσκουσιν, τὰ δ᾽ αὑτῶν, ἄλλους δὲ τὰ τῶν ἑαυτῶν. ἔοικε γὰρ πάντα ταῦτα εἶναι κατιδεῖν ἑνός τε καὶ μιᾶς τέχνης, αὑτόν, τὰ αὑτοῦ, τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ.

> Would we be able, if we did not know ourselves nor were sound-minded, to know our own bads and goods? (133c21–23).[22]

Self-knowledge is presented as a prerequisite for knowledge of what is ours. Note that this passage puts it in terms of, as I have rendered it, "our own bads and goods" (τὰ ἡμέτερα αὐτῶν κακά τε καὶ ἀγαθά, 133c23). The phrase is ambiguous between what we would normally consider "goods", in the sense of possessions, and things that are actually good for you. In this section more generally, Socrates seems to speak of "what's ours" in an elliptical way to refer to "our goods", as if he wants to make clear that only what is good for you really counts as your property.[23] On either reading, it makes sense to consider self-knowledge a prerequisite for knowledge of what's ours, although it would be a prerequisite in a different way. In the case of goods in the traditional sense, it is right to say that you need to know person X in order to know, of things α and β, that they are X's. It seems, however, that you don't need a very deep knowledge of X for this end. Things are different for "goods" understood as "what is good for you". In order to know what is good for a particular entity, you need to know the nature of that entity. This idea is not new: back in 128a1–3, it underlies Socrates' transition to self-knowledge once they agree that you must care for yourself. Moreover, if we understand goods and bads in this normative sense, it appears that self-knowledge is more than merely a prerequisite for knowledge of what's yours. It is plausible to think that self-knowledge also provides knowledge of what is good for you, at least in the respect that it is good for you. It will not magically give you knowledge of other things in the world, but it is plausible to think that it will identify those aspects of other things that are conducive to your (well-)being.[24]

This gives new content to the description of justice in the political section. If being just is to do one's own things, as was claimed there, then only someone who knows himself knows how to be just. This applies on either of the two interpretations of "one's own goods" I have outlined just now.

22 Ἆρ' οὖν μὴ γιγνώσκοντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς μηδὲ σώφρονες ὄντες δυναίμεθ' ἂν εἰδέναι τὰ ἡμέτερα αὐτῶν κακά τε καὶ ἀγαθά;

23 Note how from τὰ ἡμέτερα … ἀγαθά of 133c22, Socrates speaks of τὰ Ἀλκιβιάδου (d1–3) and τὰ ἡμέτερα (d5–6), continuing to use such phrases when he extends the argument from Alcibiades to the city (τὰ αὑτοῦ … καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων, 133e4; τὰ τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ τὰ τῶν πόλεων), but ending again by referring to τὰ ὑμέτερα ἀγαθά (in 134d8). Cf. Döring 2016: 140–141.

24 On knowledge of one's "vrai soi" as providing knowledge of what is good for one cf. Brunschwig 1996: 80; see also the more recent comments, more sympathetic to an individual reading of self-knowledge, of Rider 2011: 405–407.

The first part of the dilemma was governed by the notion of ὁμόνοια. The results of the section on self-knowledge show that this can be reconciled with justice: both are rooted in the same self-knowledge. ὁμόνοια is present in the city if the citizens know themselves and the things that are good for them. If the conversation of Socrates and Alcibiades is a paradigm for the relationships between citizens, these citizens will very much be of one mind. Their knowledge is focused on the same thing, i.e. their shared essence as thought and their shared goods, and the way in which this knowledge is acquired is – there is room for controversy here, but at least to an important extent – in the meeting of their minds.[25] (And again, specialisation is a secondary matter: we are concerned with human beings as human beings. The analogy of family roles turns out to have been misleading for political ὁμόνοια, because in real politics we are concerned with human beings *qua* human beings.)

These four points support reading the section on self-knowledge as providing the key to a better understanding of the themes of the political section. Alcibiades was right to describe politics as an expertise that deals with people. He now knows that it deals with them *qua* people (this much was right about his answers in terms of the object of political expertise). Politics is able to care for its subject matter because it can procure what is good for people, on the basis of its knowledge (prodded by Socrates, Alcibiades has correctly identified people in possession of knowledge as the relevant political actors). Alcibiades should now also be able to resolve the dilemma between justice and agreement by appealing to self-knowledge as their common origin (thus clarifying the goal of political expertise).

Let us try to tease out one more consequence of combining the political section and the self-knowledge section. Alcibiades' answers in the political section become increasingly elaborate, as we saw. In the section itself, Socrates does not seem to be satisfied that these answers single out the domain of politics, a worry which he substantiates by adducing other kinds of expertise that also have the characteristics that Alcibiades mentions as definitive of politics. If we look back on this section at the end of the dialogue, however, we can also appreciate Alcibiades' answers as increasingly detailed about the structure of politics. In order to see this, let us consider an interesting correspondence between some of Alcibiades' answers and the details of Socrates' anthropological argument.

25 See Joosse 2014: 2–5 for an overview of the debate between "theological" and "dialectical" readings. Proponents of the former, including Bos 1970, Brunschwig 1996, and now Döring 2016, also allow for an important role for interhuman exchange.

When Alcibiades identifies politics as governing people who deal with other people, in response (8), he uses the verb χρῆσθαι, "to deal with" or "to use". This is the very verb that (together with ἄρχειν) bears so much weight in Socrates' later argument. Socrates employs it to speak of the soul as using the body, from which he infers that the soul is identical with the human being. ἄρχειν too is used again, for it was of course the central term for the activity of political expertise: "ruling" or "governing". It seems, therefore, that Socrates takes up (in close association) two terms which Alcibiades had used (in close association) in defining political excellence, in order to construct his argument for identifying the human being with the soul. It is worth exploring what this correspondence implies.

It may be objected that Alcibiades and Socrates are speaking of very different things when they use the term χρῆσθαι. In answers (8) and (9), Alcibiades describes political expertise as the excellence of those with the power to rule human beings who are in contact with one another and deal with each other, and as the excellence of those with the power to rule people who share in the city and who come into contact with each other. In the Greek, the former response uses the terms συμβαλλόντων ἑαυτοῖς καὶ χρωμένων ἀλλήλοις, the latter κοινωνούντων … πολιτείας καὶ συμβαλλόντων πρὸς ἀλλήλους. The verb συμβάλλω has a wide range of meaning, which is why I have opted for the broad rendering "being in contact with". Alcibiades may have in mind anything from business transactions and contracts to joint projects, gatherings, and contributions, or simply occasions when people happen to meet each other. The emphasis seems to be on projects in which people deal with each other horizontally, on a basis of equality. This, or so goes the objection, is a very different kind of "dealing with" than the "use" which the soul makes of the body.

I think the objection is right about the much more horizontal nature of what Alcibiades understands by people dealing with each other. But this does not make it unreasonable to see a textual link between Alcibiades' answer (8) and Socrates' anthropological argument. A strong reason to hold on to that link is Socrates' reinterpretation of Alcibiades' answer. As we saw, he points to the lack of specificity of both (8) and (9) by appealing to the analogies of captains and choirmasters. He does so in the following terms. First he generalises the point: "you mean ruling people who deal with people?" (ἀνθρώπων λέγεις ἄρχειν ἀνθρώποις χρωμένων; 125c6–7) and then asks whether Alcibiades has in mind a ruling over "boatswains who deal with rowers" (κελευστῶν χρωμένων ἐρέταις; 125c9); or over "aulos-players, who lead people in song and deal with choral dancers" (ἀλλ' ἀνθρώπων λέγεις ἄρχειν αὐλητῶν, ἀνθρώποις ἡγουμένων ᾠδῆς καὶ χρωμένων χορευταῖς; 125c13–d1). In both analogies Socrates turns

Alcibiades' horizontal "dealings" into vertical ones. In a three-place chain of command, the captain rules the boatswain, who directs the rowers (the job of the κελευστής being to tell the time in order that everyone row to the same beat). The same goes in the case of the choir, where the trainer of the choir directs the aulos-players, who give the tune to the singers/dancers. In the second case, Socrates makes the vertical structure explicit by adding ἡγουμένων, "leading", as a near-synonym for χρωμένων. The middle term in the chains of command stands to the lowest in a relationship of χρῆσθαι that is very similar to the relationship of ἄρχειν in which the highest stands to the middle. These structures of use and rule are clearly hierarchical and as such fit well with the vertical relationship between soul and body which Socrates posits in the anthropological argument.

One way to make this lexical correspondence philosophically productive is to insert the anthropological unit of body and soul into the two lowest terms of the analogies of captains and choir trainers. Alcibiades has seen something true about politics because politics really is a matter of ruling people who themselves stand in a relationship of rule to something else: their bodies. Each person's soul is a boatswain with respect to his body. In this construction, the relationship of "rule" is continuous across politics and anthropology, the difference between them being their respective objects of rule. It seems to me that this interpretation does not do enough justice to the fact that it is *people* who occupy the lowest term in the chains of command in Socrates' examples and in Alcibiades' description of politics.

Another way in which the lexical corresponce might be exploited would be to infer from it a structural analogy between politics and the anthropological unit of body and soul. As the body stands to the soul, so the ruled stand to the ruler (such a figure of thought has, in fact, been influential in the history of political thought).

I think it is plausible to think that some such structural analogy is implied by the verbal correspondence. The analogy must be modified, however, to account for a major difference between two of the comparanda. The body is not only ruled by the soul, but it is unable to rule itself. In politics, however, the ruled are in fact ruled by the ruler, but they are also able to rule themselves. Political rule is rule over other principles of rule.

This analogy and this difference can help us account for two different political scenarios. The first is that represented by Alcibiades' current condition (and, we may suppose, that of Athens as a whole). Socrates ends the dialogue by pointing out to Alcibiades that he is in a shameful condition, a condition the name of which he does not even dare to utter. Just before, Socrates assured himself of Alcibiades' consent to the thesis that it is better to be ruled than to rule if one does not possess virtue (i.e. self-knowledge) (πρὶν δέ γε ἀρετὴν ἔχειν,

τὸ ἄρχεσθαι ἄμεινον ὑπὸ τοῦ βελτίονος ἢ τὸ ἄρχειν ἀνδρί, οὐ μόνον παιδί, 135b7–8). In general terms, Socrates claims that it is expedient for a bad man to be a slave (δουλεύειν, 135c2). The difference between the structure of the anthropological unit and the structure of politics can explain why this is a matter of slavery. Human beings are themselves principles of rule. They do not suddenly turn into instruments by being ruled. Their slavery consists in the fact that, although they are principles of rule, they are now being ruled.

Nevertheless, as Socrates and Alcibiades have agreed, someone who is ignorant is best off in a condition of slavery. An ignorant person is guaranteed to fail in action, so that he will fail to procure what is good, both for himself and for the things and the people he rules. When someone is ruled by another who is wise, the ruler will know what is good for his subject, will make sure that this is procured, and in so doing will improve his subject. In the case of human beings, this means that the ruler will make sure the ruled acquires self-knowledge, since this is the best condition for human beings. Rulership of this type is, as I suggested before, exemplified in the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades. This first political scenario is a scenario of education.

This description of the first political scenario brings us to a second modification of the analogy between politics and the anthropological unit. They are not merely analogous, because the wisdom that is the ruling principle in the soul is also the ruling principle of politics. In this ruling principle, the two manifestations of rule, that of the city and that of the individual, coincide.

The second political scenario which the (dis)analogy between anthropological rule and political rule helps us understand is that of cooperation. It can be understood as the end point of the educational relationship of the first scenario. When people have acquired self-knowledge and consequently know what is theirs and what is good for them, they will themselves be able to pursue what makes them happy and to act faultlessly. They will have become able to rule. They will act justly because they do what is theirs, but they will also act in agreement with their fellow rulers because they act from the same knowledge. Rather than a situation of vertical rule, this scenario is one of cooperation, in which Alcibiades and the city together act "by looking towards that which is divine" (note the plurals in 134d1–5). In this sense it is much closer to the horizontal scenario that Alcibiades envisaged when he spoke of people dealing with each other than to the vertical examples that Socrates adduced. While Alcibiades' formulation in (8) speaks of a level of rule over and above the level in which people deal with each other, the situation that obtains when citizens have acquired self-knowledge is one in which the level of rule is of a piece with the level of people's mutual dealings with each other. It is the level anticipated by Socrates' remarkable statement at 130d8–10, where he analyses his conversation with Alcibiades as an association through words in which each

uses his soul towards the other's soul (ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ προσομιλεῖν ἀλλήλοις τοῖς λόγοις χρωμένους τῇ ψυχῇ πρὸς τὴν ψυχήν).[26]

The scenario of cooperation also shows what was true about Alcibiades' other answer (9), that political excellence is shown by those who rule people who share in the πολιτεία. Here too, the level of rule over and above people's dealings with each other turns out to be of a piece with these dealings, and more specifically to be constitutive of the citizens' sharing in the πολιτεία – where this is understood as the ruling framework of the city, the guiding wisdom displayed by all self-knowing citizens.

5 Conclusion

We started by noting a number of puzzles about the internal coherence of the *Alcibiades I* and about the ending of the dialogue. I have argued that the section on self-knowledge is intimately linked to the political section that precedes it. It can be interpreted as solving the major dilemma developed in this political section and as giving more substantive content to the descriptions which Alcibiades has offered of political expertise. The connection between these two parts of the text also explains why Socrates moves from talking about the content and method of self-knowledge to an exhortation to pursue virtue in general as the way to become politically successful, and why Alcibiades can respond to this exhortation by pledging to pursue justice. Virtue has turned out to be self-knowledge, which is practiced through the just action – a human being's very own affair – of philosophical dialogue.

After his first admission of ignorance, Alcibiades' second search for the nature of politics is far from futile, even if Socrates' elenctic strategy may give the impression that it is: it provides a description of politics that can be understood once we see that a political expert has knowledge of himself and of what is his. From self-knowledge follow agreement and justice, and with them the best condition of the city. This will be a city, moreover, in which experts enslave non-experts in order to make them fellow experts. As joint experts, they will then share in rule: their rule is over fellow rulers whose rule agrees with

26 The most plausible interpretation of this phrase, in my view, would construe χρωμένους as taking both τοῖς λόγοις and τῇ ψυχῇ as its objects. Alternatively τοῖς λόγοις could be taken independently from χρωμένους as an instrumental clause with προσομιλεῖν; in either case, the ψυχή, the user of the anthropological argument, is surprisingly cast in the role of thing used. See Johnson 1999: 5–6 on some implications of the idea of using the soul for the anthropological argument and Joosse 2014: 10–14 for the identification of human beings with the wisdom that uses λόγος.

theirs. Their shared humanity offers them the common orientation to judge good from bad, theirs from not theirs.[27]

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CHAPTER 4

Plato's Journey through the Conflict: Knowledge, Action and καιρός in the Syracusan Experience

Filippo Forcignanò

Abstract

The first aim of the paper is to discuss the relationship between knowing and acting in Plato's *Seventh Letter*, showing that we can interpret it in two ways: first, in strictly theoretical terms (i.e. the relationship between knowing and acting *in general*); and second, from a more biographical and historical point of view (i.e. in connection with the life and action of Plato). Although the two ways are strictly linked, we do not have to think that Plato wanted to export his *kallipolis* to the Sicilian context. Therefore, it's not by chance that the *Seventh Letter* shows the highest concentration of the *kairos* lexicon in the whole *Corpus Platonicum*. The second aim of the paper is to carry out an extensive investigation of pre-Platonic and Platonic use of the word *kairos*. In the last part of the paper I examine the so-called "philosophical *excursus*" of the *Seventh Letter*, showing that it is part of the text in a very strict way.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, it discusses the relationship between knowing and acting in Plato's *Seventh Letter*, and it tries to clarify why Plato wrote it. The secondary (but not independent) goal is to analyse the role of the notion of καιρός in the epistle. I write "Plato's" because I am very confident that the letter is authentic. However, I will not discuss this issue here. I will also make few references to the dialogues, since I am not interested in proving the consistency of the letter with the *Corpus*.[1]

1 The scholarly community is notoriously divided on the issue of authenticity. It's impossible to discuss in this paper the most important proposals of athetesis (see, for example, Maddalena 1948, Edelstein 1966, Gulley 1972 and the more recent Irwin 2009 and Burnyeat–Frede 2015, on which see Kahn 2015). Likewise, it is not possible to support its authenticity. I prefer therefore to affirm dogmatically that the letter is authentic and to discuss it as such. Many scholars affirm the authenticity or inauthenticity of the letter without giving conclusive arguments, including Kahn 1996, n. 48 (authenticity) and Rowe 2007 (inauthenticity). This does not mean that I believe we can prove for once and for all the authenticity of the letter. Indeed, as argued by Isnardi Parente 1970: 49, this probably will never be possible. I rather believe that the burden of proof is on those who deny, and not on those who maintain, authenticity.

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We can interpret the relationship between knowing and acting in Plato in two ways. First of all, under the strictly theoretical aspect; secondly, from a more factual and biographical point of view. The first consists of wondering what is and what should be, according to Plato, the relationship between knowing and acting *in general*;[2] the second of investigating such connections in Plato's concrete political experience in Syracuse and in its unique testament, the *Seventh Letter*. Plato, indeed, as it is known, never intervened actively in the Athenian political scene.[3]

The two approaches are related, but they are not the same, and one is not dependent on the other in the strict sense. Plato, in his writings, especially in the *Republic*, theorized a strong connection between knowing and acting. Philosophers have to govern precisely because they are philosophers (i.e. they *govern* because they *know*). However, we do not have to stress the connection between the two levels to explain Plato's political experience in Syracuse. Similarly, we should not think that Plato wanted to export his *kallipolis* to the

This is true despite the fact that the Greek epistolary genre is extremely problematic. Concerning the dating of the letter, the debate is less aleatory. Gallazzi 2008 published a fragment of papyrus from the first half of the third century B.C. extremely relevant to the present discourse. It indeed contains a passage (356a6–8) of the *Eighth Letter*, which is the only other of Plato's letters considered authentic by many scholars. The *Seventh* and the *Eighth* letters are undeniably strongly connected. Aristophanes of Byzantium had in Alexandria a collection of Plato's work containing some letters. It is easy to assume that the *Seventh* and the *Eighth* were among them. Plato died about sixty (sixty-five) years earlier. The Academy was very scrupulous in the control of the circulation of Plato's texts. It is hard to imagine that the two letters were produced by a counterfeiter outside the Academy, and subsequently included in the Platonic corpus known in Alexandria. Or (and this is an even more complex scenario) that two different counterfeiters produced the two letters at different times. The *Seventh* and the *Eighth* letters soon became, in all likelihood, part of Plato's heritage. This certainly does not prove the authenticity of the two letters, but it offers a very strong proof for their antiquity.

2 I say "in general" not only to emphasize the theoretical level, but also because, reading the dialogues, you get the impression that most of the political pages Plato wrote concern themselves with problems and people of the previous generations. I have no doubt that Plato wrote for his own time, but he never spoke directly to his contemporaries and about them. A very subtle observation is that of Morrow 1935: 114–115: "The fundamentals of the political problem change very little from generation to generation, and for a man interested in getting back to first principles the thought of the Periclean Age could easily serve as an instructive approach to the political issues of the fourth century." But we should not superimpose our conception of history on that of Plato's contemporaries. As clarified by Field 1930: 106 Plato and others thinkers of the fourth Century did not distinguish clearly between their time and the previous ones.

3 We infer the interest of the young Plato in politics from the autobiographical section of the letter, but we have no further confirmation. Some scholars think that the autobiographical section is spurious exactly for this reason (for instance, Boas 1948; *contra* Bluck 1949).

Sicilian *polis.*[4] The political dialogues do not offer any practical proposals intended for application to a situation such as the Syracusan scenario in which Plato tried to act.[5] Although Plato suggested combining power and knowledge in the same person in Syracuse too, there is no reason to think that the Sicilian city was for him a potential *kallipolis*. The political principles of the *Republic* did not *stricto sensu* dictate Plato's political action in Syracuse. It was a specific case requiring equally specific solutions, but without deviating from some general principles.

1 Pre-Platonic and Platonic Use of the καιρός Lexicon

The word καιρός occurs eight times in the (pseudo)Platonic epistles: once in the *First*, in the *Ninth*, and in the *Eleventh*, and five times in the *Seventh*. By contrast, the word occurs six times in the whole *Republic*, six also in the *Politicus*, and nineteen times in the *Laws*. Overall, the word appears a few more than fifty times in the *Corpus Platonicum.*[6] It is a very significant contrast. Since the *Seventh Letter* is 28 pages long, the word καιρός occurs every 5,6 pages. Since the *Republic* is 294, the word occurs every 49 pages. The *Politicus* is 54, so it occurs every 9 pages. Finally, the *Laws* is 345, so it occurs every 18,1 pages. The *Politicus* and the *Laws* are rough contemporaries of the letter – belonging, I mean, to the

4 This is confirmed by the very beginning of the text, where Plato says he would surely join Dion's *hetairoi* if and only if their *dianoia* were the same as Dion's. This *dianoia* is explained at 324b as the opinion according to which the Syracusans ought to be free and governed by the best laws. This is surely not coherent with the *Republic*. But this does not contradicts the proposal of mixing philosophy and political power in the same person.

5 See Irwin 2009: 143.

6 I write "a few more than fifty times" and not a precise number because some occurrences are controversial, exactly as they are in the letters. Here is the list of passages I consider properly Plato's: *Crit.* 44a8 (right time); *Prot.* 340e8 (circumstance); *Resp.* 370b8 (right time), c4 (right time), 374c2 (right time), 409d1 (appropriate), 421a7 (circumstance, opportunity), 546d2 (right time), *Phaed.* 107a5 (right time); *Phaedr.* 229a3 (circumstance); *Theaet.* 187e1 (appropriate), 207e7 (circumstance); *Soph.* 260a1 (appropriate); *Pol.* 270a6 (right time), 277a6 (appropriate), 284e6 (appropriate), 307b1 (right time), 307b9 (appropriate), 310e2 (appropriate); *Tim.* 38b4 (occasion), 85d1 (circumstance), *Leg.* 630c7 (appropriate), 636e3 (appropriate), 687a5 (circumstance), 702b7 (circumstance), 708e2 (appropriate), 709b7 (circumstance), c1 (circumstance), 744b5 (opportunity), 745e9 (circumstance), 772e6 (opportunity), 842a8 (right time), 916d8 (right time), e2 (right time), 926e9 (opportune), 938b2 (appropriate), 945c3 (circumstance), c7 (circumstance), 961c8 (right time), 968e1 (right time), *Ep. VII* 324b7 (occasion), 326a2 (right time), 327e3 (circumstance), 334d4 (circumstance/time), 339d1 (appropriate).

last phase of Plato's production. The *Republic* is surely previous (I emphasize it inasmuch as it is a political text). The frequency in the letter is therefore almost twice that of the *Politicus*, more than triple that of the *Laws*, and more than eight times that of the *Republic*.

Kairos was a very polysemous word and a very complex concept.[7] As Wilson pointed out, it was "a beautiful flexible word".[8] Through the Fifth and Fourth centuries, it notoriously had metaphysical, ethical, aesthetic, and political applications, but it was also a central rhetorical concept, as Kinneavy explained very well.[9] In rhetorical contexts, it meant "propriety," "occasion," "due measure," "decorum," "convenience," "proportion" and many other similar things. As P. Sipiora writes, "in some critical ways, *kairos* is similar to another master term, *logos*, in that both concepts generated many significant definitions and interpretations and carried strategic implications for historical interpretation".[10] The first occurrences of the term, in Homer, specified a vital *part* of the body, not a lapse of time or a due measure.[11] Hesiod was the first to use *kairos* in the sense of "due measure" or "proportion" in a very mundane sense.[12] Only later did the temporal meaning become central. In this sense, the word *kairos* was connected to another temporal term, *chronos*. *Chronos* specified linear time, i.e. time that proceeds numerically from past to future.[13] *Chronos* is continuous. *Kairos* is a precise, particular, *qualitative* moment on the line of time.[14] *Chronos* is the quantity of duration, while *kairos* is a qualitative time, the *right time* in which something happens or can happen.[15] In other words, *kairos* means a circumstance, or better an occasion. *Chronos* does not confer to time any qualitative value, as *kairos* does. According to Kermode, *kairos* is "a point in time filled with significance, charged with meaning derived from its relation to the end" (1970: 47). *Kairos* is a portion of *chronos*, so to speak. In short, "*chronos* measures duration while *kairos* marks force".[16] Politically speaking, *kairos* offers an opportunity to act. As Ward writes, it is the

7 See Trédé 1992.
8 Wilson 1980.
9 See Kinneavy 1986 and the important Sipiora–Baumlin 2002.
10 See Sipiora–Baumlin 2002: 1.
11 For instance, Homer *Il.* 8.84, 326 (Homer uses the καιρ – root adjectivally).
12 For instance, Hesiod. *Erg.* 694: a wagon must not be filled over measure.
13 See Philippson 1949: esp. 89 ff.
14 It could be neutral, positive (*eukairos*) or negative (*akairos*, see *Phaedr*. 272a) value.
15 see Smith 1986: 4.
16 See Hawhee 2004: 66.

"decisive, critical point dependent on one who has the skill and wherewithal to act".[17]

The notion of *kairos* was important both among the Presocratics and in the Sophistic movement. *Kairos* was in particular a central issue in Pythagorean thought. With regard to this topic, a 1922 paper by Augusto Rostagni is still fundamental.[18] Rostagni first emphasized the role of the *kairos* among the Pythagoreans. The Pythagoreans gave "further complexity to the concept of *kairos*, linking it closely with justice, and consequently with civic education".[19] The Pythagorean notion of *kairos* also maintained a metaphysical tinge – it was to all effects a cosmic law – but it also had an ethical application. According to Rostagni, among the Pythagoreans the most important thing in practical contexts was the *kairos*, as we read in Iamblichus.[20] This use of *kairos* is important for my current intentions. The Pythagoreans, indeed, very strongly linked the *kairos* and the *dikaion*. The Sophists "continued this ethical facet of *kairos*, although some of them flirted dangerously with the extreme relativism that a notion of situational determinism could carry with it".[21] Among the Sophists, rhetoric became "an expression of *kairos*".[22] This background played a central role in the formation of Plato's ethics and aesthetics, as described by the 1924 seminal work by Teodoro Levi.[23] According to Levi, the dialectical notion of unity in plurality links ethics and aesthetics through the notion of proportion (*kairos*). Plato understood the relativism implicit in the situational ethics of the Sophists and tried to furnish an alternative.[24] But he didn't give up on this notion. We find in Plato an esthetic, temporal, rhetorical and political use of the term. I now want to concentrate on the last use, in particular in the *Seventh Letter*. As I have already said, the letter has the highest concentration of occurrences in the *Corpus*. I believe that the analysis of these occurrences provides a good perspective from which to investigate the relationship between knowing and acting in the letter.[25]

17 Ward 2008: xii. Cfr. Rämö 1999: 312.
18 Rostagni 1922.
19 Kinneavy 1986: 59.
20 *VP* 49; 181 for a short discussion about the notion of *kairos*.
21 Kinneavy 1986: 62.
22 See Sipiora–Baumlin 2002: 4.
23 Levi 1924.
24 See Kinneavy 1986: 62.
25 At 334d4 εἰς τὸν παρόντα καιρὸν means "for the present time," not "proper time" or "occasion"; at 339d1 ταῦθ᾽οὕτως εἶπεν, τἆλλα δὲ μακρὰ ἂν εἴη καὶ ἄνευ καιροῦ λεγόμενα means "he said these things; the others things it would be too long and amiss to report." Although it is a case similar to the first occurrence, it is not worth to discussing it, for obvious reasons.

The first occurrence is 324b5–7:

> τίς δ' ἦν ὁ τρόπος τῆς γενέσεως αὐτῆς, οὐκ ἀπάξιον ἀκοῦσαι νέῳ καὶ μὴ νέῳ, πειράσομαι δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς αὐτὴν ἐγὼ πρὸς ὑμᾶς διεξελθεῖν· ἔχει γὰρ καιρὸν τὰ νῦν.

> The way this idea was formed it is not unworthy of being listened to, for young and old alike, so I'll try to describe it to you from the very beginning: the present is indeed the right moment to do it.[26]

The epistle sent to Plato from Syracuse[27] takes the opportunity to tell a story, that of Dion's political project for the city. The *Seventh Letter* begins by recalling the διάνοια of Dion, which Plato declares that he knows very well, since it formed in him precisely by listening to Plato's lessons, and conversing with him on the good.[28] What the reader expects after this declaration is indeed the story of the training of Dion and the development of his διάνοια. This is totally subverted by the continuation of the text. It actually tells the story of a young man confronted with the politics of his city, but this man is not Dion, but Plato himself. Time is really opportune to tell a story, that of the feelings of Plato faced with the political events of Athens. Immediately after declaring that the time is opportune to speak about Dion, begins the more autobiographical section of the epistle.[29]

The second occurrence is 326a1:

> τά τε τῶν νόμων γράμματα καὶ ἔθη διεφθείρετο καὶ ἐπεδίδου θαυμαστὸν ὅσον, ὥστε με, τὸ πρῶτον πολλῆς μεστὸν ὄντα ὁρμῆς ἐπὶ τὸ πράττειν τὰ κοινά, βλέποντα εἰς ταῦτα καὶ φερόμενα ὁρῶντα πάντῃ πάντως, τελευτῶντα ἰλιγγιᾶν, καὶ τοῦ μὲν σκοπεῖν μὴ ἀποστῆναι μή ποτε ἄμεινον ἂν γίγνοιτο περί τε αὐτὰ

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26 Translations are mine (unless otherwise specified).

27 Whether it is real or fictional, the very beginning of the letter presents itself as a *reply* to a Dion's friend letter.

28 Repeating many times in a few pages (326b4, d9; 327b9, d7; 328b10, c4; 330b5; 331a7) the term διάνοια, Plato wants to suggest that Dion's opinion is a result of his teaching. See Butti de Lima 2015: 135. That the overthrow of tyranny has been suggested to Dion, perhaps unconsciously, by Plato is clearly stated at 327a1–5: "Dion was a young man at that time, and in our conversations I imparted to him my ideas of human welfare and urged him to put them into practice; and in so doing I was secretly, and all unwittingly, working for the future destruction of tyranny."

29 See Gomperz 1928, Momigliano 1971: 60 ff., Brisson 1993, Rossetti 1995, Erler 2005, Irwin 2009.

> ταῦτα καὶ δὴ καὶ περὶ τὴν πᾶσαν πολιτείαν, τοῦ δὲ πράττειν αὖ περιμένειν ἀεὶ καιρούς.
>
> Our laws and institutions were steadily degenerating, so much so that, whereas at first I had been full of zeal for public life, when I looked closely and saw how unstable everything was, I became at last completely bewildered; and though I did not cease to reflect upon some way of bringing about an improvement in the laws and customs and even in the whole constitution, yet I refrained from action, waiting for proper time…

Plato uses very well-balanced words to describe the return of democracy, praising the moderation of those who got back into Athens. Nevertheless, Plato was soon taken by bitterness, since the Democrats sentenced Socrates to death. This fact distanced Plato from politics, but did not suppress his political ambition, as the passage just now quoted proves. But Plato had to acknowledge that, without a philosophical revolution, a political metamorphosis was impossible, as 326a2–7 proves:

> τελευτῶντα δὲ νοῆσαι περὶ πασῶν τῶν νῦν πόλεων ὅτι κακῶς σύμπασαι πολιτεύονται – τὰ γὰρ τῶν νόμων αὐταῖς σχεδὸν ἀνιάτως ἔχοντά ἐστιν ἄνευ παρασκευῆς θαυμαστῆς τινος μετὰ τύχης – λέγειν τε ἠναγκάσθην, ἐπαινῶν τὴν ὀρθὴν φιλοσοφίαν, ὡς ἐκ ταύτης ἔστιν τά τε πολιτικὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ τῶν ἰδιωτῶν πάντα κατιδεῖν·
>
> At last I came to the conclusion that all cities were badly governed – since their laws were practically untreatable without miraculous measures of some sort combined with good fortune – and I was forced to admit, in praise of the right philosophy, that it alone is able to distinguish what is just, either in the affairs of the city or in the individual.[30]

Plato introduces philosophy only at this point and not speaking about Socrates, describing his disenchantment with the political situation in Athens. Doing philosophy is the only way to establish what is just for the *polis* and for each person. To put it another way, the most shocking and trailblazing achievement of the whole of Plato's *Bildung* is the inextricable linkage between knowledge and action. This does not mean that *kairos* is completely overtaken by

30 See *Resp.* 6.499a-c.

philosophy. Philosophy is the key to acting rightly when the opportunity presents itself, not the way to control all opportunities.

The third, very significant, occurrence is 327e3–5:

> Τίνας γὰρ καιρούς, ἔφη, μείζους περιμενοῦμεν τῶν νῦν παραγεγονότων θείᾳ τινὶ τύχῃ;
>
> "What better opportunity are we waiting for," he said, "than the situation with which fortune has presented us?".

In one of the most emotionally touching passages of the whole letter, Plato reports a dialogue between Dion and himself that opens with the quoted question. Dion wants to cajole Plato showing that there will never be a better opportunity than that provided by the young Dionysius. In other words, fate is offering the ideal opportunity to make Plato's philosophical project a concrete political experiment. Plato is wary for many reasons, in particular the young age of Dionysius, but finally he agrees, as we read at 328b7–c1:

> ὅθεν μοι σκοπουμένῳ καὶ διστάζοντι πότερον εἴη πορευτέον καὶ ὑπακουστέον ἢ πῶς, ὅμως ἔρρεψε δεῖν, εἴ ποτέ τις τὰ διανοηθέντα περὶ νόμων τε καὶ πολιτείας ἀποτελεῖν ἐγχειρήσοι, καὶ νῦν πειρατέον εἶναι·
>
> Whence I weighed up the question, and I was undecided whether or not to listen to him and make the crossing; what tipped the scales was that if someone could bring to completion the ideas on laws and government, that was the moment to try.

Without mentioning the *kairos*, Plato conveys the same certainty as Dion. The time is now.

The letter testifies (330c) that many people were surprised by the fact that Plato returned to Syracuse a second time. Understanding this aspect is also essential, in my opinion, to deciphering the relationship between knowledge and acting in relation to the *kairos* lexicon. In this respect, the letter makes two rather surprising statements, one explicitly and the other implicitly. What the letter explicitly states is that political action necessarily requires philosophy. But the autobiographical section, as we have seen, does not simply say that we need philosophy to act rightly in politics. It says that if we want to act rightly in politics, we must recognize that *only* philosophy makes us able to do it. In other words, experience leads to philosophy, not the opposite. This page seems to completely reverse the order of ideas in two passages of the *Republic*, 473d-e

and 499b1, which seem to state that philosophy compels experience and action (not the opposite). We build the perfect State in our *logoi*, then this *paradeigma* forces us to act in a certain way (and not in any other of the possible ways).[31] This leaves us with an apparent contradiction. The *Republic* states that we are forced by the truth; the *Seventh Letter* that we are forced by the facts: how to explain this apparent paradox? Firstly, it is important to clarify in the best possible way what the letter says. It states that facts (i.e. the failure of the existing form of government) compel us to turn to philosophy, since it is not possible to solve the *stasis* on the basis of the facts themselves. This implies an epistemological resolution of practical conflicts. But the conversion to philosophy is, in itself, without content: it is just a methodological priority (i.e. knowing must precede acting). But philosophy states, according to the truth, that only philosophers can govern in accordance with the moral standard. The difference between the letter and the *Republic* is of perspective: the letter speaks of facts and actions in an autobiographical way; the *Republic* speaks in a theoretical way. There is no contradiction, but rather *interpenetration*.

The letter, however, says much more, even if not *apertis verbis*. To apply philosophy, we surely need to have a right city, but philosophy needs certain conditions to become political action. This further complicates the interpenetration between knowing and acting. The bankruptcy of the current political leaderships reveals to us the need for philosophy to govern the *polis* rightly; we therefore elaborate a theoretical paradigm of acting rightly; but philosophy needs good conditions to become effective and we must be ready to adapt our paradigm to circumstances. One of the most relevant achievement of the letter is highlighting exactly the centrality of the *kairos* in political programs. We cannot generate the right moment. We must be prepared to rely on good luck. But when the opportunity presents itself, we must *know* what to do.

When Plato promises to take part in the Syracusan scenario ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ, he states something we are able to understand only after reading of the whole text. At 328c4–9 Plato claims to be afraid to seem a big-mouth, a windbag, a man unable to translate his ideas into action. But translating *theoria* into practice requires, as I have said, conditions partially beyond the control of the philosopher. When Dion adopts the argument of the appropriate time to act in Sicily to persuade Plato, he emphasizes exactly this issue. The right time may never come again. Dion, of course, alludes to the fact that in Syracuse there was a young tyrant, with all the power in his own hands, and even excited about philosophy. We know from the political dialogues that there are two ways to obtain the best government: (i) to create a class of philosophically

31 See *Resp.* 499b1–c5.

educated rulers; (ii) to educate the current rulers philosophically. From a purely pragmatic point of view, it is much easier to educate current rulers rather than to create *ex nihilo* a new class of rulers; and it is even easier to educate a single man with all the power in his own hands than a group of men. The *kairos* Dion stresses is therefore very tempting for Plato. But at the same time it is in a certain sense shocking: the *Republic* states – in books VIII and IX – that tyranny is the worst form of government and that the tyrant is the worst man on earth, more like an animal than a human being. Reality, however, suggests that the best situation in which to try to implement our political project is precisely tyranny. It is usually said that Plato's last political works are dominated by pessimism or at least by disillusionment. This is certainly correct. But it could also be a way of saying that they show the awareness that time is the middle term between philosophy and politics.

2 Why Did Plato Write the *Seventh Letter*?

I agree with those who argue that the *Seventh Letter* is a sort of open letter to the Athenians. This requires further study. For Athenians late in the Fifth century, one of the most important consequences of Persian War was the restoration of the anti-tyrannical spirit, not only for a political reason, but for an ontological one: tyranny is proper to the barbarians, it is an Oriental fact, which does not belong to the Athenians in a proper sense. Tyranny, in other words, is a perversion of the nature of the Athenian race. With the development of democracy, tyranny became in the fifth century a central theme of cultural, political, and philosophical debate. It is within this culture that a stereotyped image of the tyrant was developed as part of the democratic propaganda. Plato was a fierce opponent of tyranny, but he was also at two times near to tyrants, in Athens and in Sicily (i.e. the Thirty Tyrants and Dionysius). He wrote strongly anti-tyrannical pages, but he seemed to flirt with tyrants. The letter explains Plato's reasons and not only in the realm of autobiography, but also in that of theory. I am referring to the theory of the degenerate forms of government of the eighth book of the *Republic* (i.e. timocracy → oligarchy → democracy → tyranny). Tyranny produces no transition to another form of government. But Plato's active intervention in Syracuse presupposes exactly this possibility. The *Republic* has nothing to say about the reformability of tyranny. It does not say explicitly that it is not possible, but the ninth book is so clear about the perversion of the soul of the tyrant that we are authorized to think that, according to the *Republic*, tyranny is not reformable at all. It could be argued that the *Republic* is aware that persuading a single man with all the power in his own hands is the easiest

solution. This is surely right, but the *Republic* does not say that this is the *best* occasion. This is entirely consistent with the strong condemnation of the *bios tyrannikos*. But there is, in my opinion, also a contextual (i.e. political and strategic) reason: the *Republic* is a very Athenian dialogue, entirely set in Athens, addressed to the Athenians. It is a sort of *manifesto* of the Academy. How could Plato indicate tyranny as a desirable condition in such a text?

We can draw another lesson from the *Seventh Letter* on the linkage between knowledge and action. There is always a gap between *paradeigmata* and reality. Therefore politics requires a sort of pragmatism. This is the reason why, as already mentioned, I think we must not conflate the relationship between knowledge and action in the *Republic* with the political experience of Plato in Syracuse. Since time impels our decisions, we cannot act forced only by the truth. There is always a hiatus between our theory and our concrete possibilities. If philosophy aspires also to be political action, we must be ready to assign greater importance to the facts than the philosopher of the *Republic* would grant. We surely need for philosophy to act rightly, but philosophy needs certain conditions to be effective; and tyranny is the best condition of all.

Plato's biggest problem was that his attempt in Syracuse was a resounding catastrophe! He had no successes to boast of in Athens, but only a pedagogical failure and a series of massacres in the name of his school to justify in the eyes of his fellow citizens. The main purpose of the *Seventh Letter* is not only to save Plato as a man, but above all as a philosopher. And this is the reason why we find an epistemological interlude (i.e. the so-called "philosophical *excursus*") in the middle of an autobiographical and political text. Only by understanding what philosophy is can people understand why there is no link between Plato's own philosophy and Dionysius' and Callippus' behavior.

When Plato wrote the letter, Dion has already been killed by Callippus.[32] Syracuse was a powder keg.[33] The Dionians were in a complicated situation, but perhaps they already had gained power.[34] No one could be certain of the

32 For Callippus, see Nails 2002: 77–78.

33 According to some scholars (among others, Souilhé, Egermann, Harward, Morrow, and Bluck), the letter was written between 354 and 353, during the civil war; according to others (for instance, Beloch, Novotný, and Pasquali) it was written between 535 and 352, when Ipparinus took power. I do not think we can decide this point for once and for all. The list of cautions that Plato lavishes on the Dionians at 336c ff. might suggest he is speaking to someone who has already gotten power (inviting him not to abuse it). But this is only an impression that is not supported by perspicuous elements in the text. In both cases, however, the situation of Syracuse was precarious and the Dionians exposed to serious hazards.

34 See Pasquali 1938: 50: "La lettera VII avverte i Dionei di guardarsi dall'abusare della vittoria."

intentions of Hipparinus,[35] the leader of the Dion's *hetairia*. The Dionians sought support outside Syracuse. It therefore must have seemed natural to them to turn to Plato, an old friend of Dion who had taken to heart the fate of Syracuse. They were realistically looking for an endorsement. But it is significant that Plato writes, as already mentioned, ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ. This expression is meaningful. Plato uses it five times in the *corpus* (outside of the letters) – *Resp*. 382e9; *Tim*. 19e7; *Leg*. 636a5, 909d4, and 964d5 – and especially in the last phase of its production. Throughout, Plato indicates full consistency between the sphere of speech and that of action. Above all, he indicates a coherence that does not fail the test of facts. Plato does not refer in the letter necessarily to a personal intervention, but to participating in the most consistent possible way. This is a central idea of the letter, i.e. promoting himself as a man who acted consistently with what he said during his lifetime. Or, in other words, promoting his own philosophy as speculation that has consistent practical consequences. The passage 328c4–8 shows this perfectly:

> ταύτῃ μὲν δὴ τῇ διανοίᾳ τε καὶ τόλμῃ ἀπῆρα οἴκοθεν, οὐχ ᾗ τινες ἐδόξαζον, ἀλλ' αἰσχυνόμενος μὲν ἐμαυτὸν τὸ μέγιστον, μὴ δόξαιμί ποτε ἐμαυτῷ παντάπασι λόγος μόνον ἀτεχνῶς εἶναι τίς, ἔργου δὲ οὐδενὸς ἄν ποτε ἑκὼν ἀνθάψασθαι
>
> It was with this purpose and resolution that I set forth on this adventure, and not with what some ascribed to me; I was very deeply ashamed of the opinion I had of myself, that is being a mere theorist, unable to achieve something practical.

This is the first of three passages in which Plato makes clear the internal process by which he deliberated about the departure to Syracuse. As the elegant "mere theorist" I have borrowed from Morrow's translation shows, Plato was concerned about looking like someone who devotes time to abstract reflections unable to weigh on the reality. The juxtaposition between λόγος and ἔργον illuminates the previous sequence ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ. It is particularly notable that the passage translated above is strongly related to one of the occurrences of καιρός, i.e. the persuasive rhetorical question asked Plato by Dion.

Passages like these show why Plato wrote the letter. We do not know – and we will never know – if the letter was actually sent to Syracuse. But this is, in a sense, not decisive. Plato wanted to show the Athenians – and perhaps to posterity – that the Academy was not, despite his relationship with Dion, Dionysius and Callippus, a school for tyrants and murderers. When Dion took

35 Hipparinus II, son of Dionysius and Dion's nephew.

power in 357 BC, he instituted a reign different from that of Dionysius in ideology, but not in violence. His government was overthrown with brutality by Callippus, an Academic, after three years. Behind this bloodshed, some gossips hissed that Plato betrayed Dion. Many people regarded him as an Academic, so these gossips had to be particularly worrisome for the school. With some charity, we can affirm, as M. Isnardi Parente has written, that these facts almost revealed a strong political immaturity within the Academy.[36]

To recap once again, Plato went twice to Syracuse to convert Dionysius to philosophy. But the young boy was a tyrant, son of a tyrant, and he never adopted a form of government other than tyranny. When Dionysius lost trust in Dion, word that he was instead very devoted to Plato circulated, as the letter itself recognizes (329d1–330a2). Why was a tyrant very devoted to Plato? Dion, expelled from Syracuse, spent almost ten years in Athens, attending the Academy. According to many people, he was to all effects a pupil of Plato; he was also known as friend of Speusippus. It was hard not to consider him an Academic. A rumor circulated that many Academics were trying to persuade Dion to return in Syracuse to take the power by force. Plato was in all likelihood really neutral, but that was enough to cast the Academy in a very bad light. Dion indeed came back to Syracuse with a small army (around 800 soldiers), but with the secret support of the Carthaginians. He succeeded in taking power; he was named *strategos autokrator* by the *demos*. His power quickly became despotic. It was no longer possible to distinguish him from a tyrant. He was surrounded by bodyguards and he did not hesitate to use force against anyone he suspected of betraying his faction. He also killed Heracleides, the head of the fleet, with no mercy. Abandoned by the *demos*, Dion was eventually killed by Callippus, who was, according to gossip, one of the pupils of Plato. Also Callippus too tried to create a Platonic government, but he was a cruel tyrant. He was killed after only one year. Moral of the story: anyone who tried to establish a Platonic government in Syracuse became a tyrant. Plato was known to say that to govern rightly we need to know rightly: why were all his pupils tyrants? Was it a problem of knowing or acting? It should be clear by now that my thesis is that one of the goals of the letter is precisely to explain this scandalous situation. Plato's strategy consists in three steps. Firstly, to save Dion from charges of being a tyrant. Dion's δίανοια καὶ ἐπιθυμία was entirely adherent to teachings of Plato: for Dion, as for his teacher, the Syracusans had to be free and governed by the best laws (324a8–b2). This surely is not the political project of a tyrant. According to Plato, this was also the Hipparinus' *manifesto*. Plato knows that Dion could have conceived the project of overthrowing tyranny

36 Isnardi Parente 1970: 13.

by force listening to his lectures, but he dissociates himself from this choice (327a1–5). This becomes clear at 331c6–d6. If a man thinks that his city is not well governed, he has the duty to say so, without risking his life; but he does not have the duty to use force to impose a correct constitution. We read something similar at 327d3–4. This a very problematic issue. This ideal of a peaceful revolution is in sharp contrast with all the political dialogues (see, for example, *Resp*. VII 540a-c; *Pol*. 293c-d). These passages might suggest that the letter is not by Plato. I don't have a precise answer. But in my opinion the invitation to act ἄνευ σφαγῶν καὶ θανάτων, or ἄνευ φυγῶν καὶ σφαγῆς is just a pragmatic position rather than a re-discussion of some theoretical assumption.

The second step is to exclude Callippus from the list of Academics (see 333d7–e5, which surely concerns Callippus and Philostratos). In Plutarch (*Dio*. 17, 2), we read that Callippus hosted Dion in Athens. This might be true. The words οὐκ ἐκ φιλοσοφίας of the *Seventh Letter*, however, firmly exclude Callippus from the school. Dion, according to Plato, met Callippus during the Eleusinian Mysteries or in another situation, but not in the school.

The third step is the most complex. Plato claims he has not been able to teach anything to Dionysius, because he never really paid attention to his lessons (330a2–b6). Both Plato's attempts to persuade Dionysius were resounding failures.

3 The Epistemological Excursus

When Plato arrived in Syracuse he subjected Dionysius to a πεῖρα, i.e. an examination of his capacities and intentions. The test was brief and incomplete, as Plato writes (340b–341b). Dionysius was not stupid, despite being used to getting everything effortlessly. But philosophy is a very long, laborious, and often vain work. Shortly after the meeting with Plato, Dionysius wrote a book of Platonic philosophy (341b3–4). This not only shows his inadequacy, but it is also a strong proof of his ignorance of Plato's philosophy. Anyone familiar with it, indeed, knows very well that you can not write its kernel. The *excursus* is a very methodological passage and a masterpiece in epistemology. We can examine it as such, i.e. as a synthesis of Plato's epistemology, but this not my goal here. I want to show briefly how the *excursus* fits into the economy of the letter. In other words, the aim of this section is showing that the presence of an epistemological theory is inescapable in the political context of the *Seventh Letter*.

The letter itself makes clear the function of the *excursus* in the economy of the text: justifying the nature of the philosophical inquiry and consequently explaining why Dionysius refused Plato's teaching. At 341c5–d2 Plato explains

that his knowledge is not communicable ὡς ἄλλα μαθήματα ("like other knowledges"), but after a long relationship and coexistence with the thing itself, it appears in a soul like a pulsating sudden spark. This passage discloses the general conception of knowledge that emerges from the *Seventh Letter*. Philosophy does not proceed by accumulation. In doing philosophy, we don't make progress step by step, notion after notion, but the preliminary, long, and exhausting work we do can suddenly generate knowledge. In other words, philosophy is not like the work of those who build houses, brick by brick, but like the work of those who try to light a fire by rubbing sticks: our work does not necessarily produce good results.

The philosophical *excursus* starts just after this remark. The mastery of the author of the letter is outstanding: the transition from the political and autobiographical tone of the first part of the text to the philosophical tone of the *excursus* is very fluid in virtue of the anecdote of the πεῖρα. At 342a3–6 we read that there is a λόγος ἀληθής ("a true discourse") condemning anyone who dares to write what Plato believes nobody can accurately write. This λόγος is the *excursus*. Plato himself describes it as a πλάνος ("digression") at 344d3. Here is the sequence: (1) Dionysius did not understand Plato's philosophy, (2) because all of his sources are ignorant of it, (3) as evidenced by the fact that they wrote manuals, (4) but this is strongly discouraged by a "true discourse" (i.e. the *excursus*).

4 Conclusion

The *Seventh Letter* offers an original approach to the linkage between knowing and acting in Plato – original in relation to the dialogues, in particular the *Republic*. If I have been successful, it should be clear that the distinguishing feature of the letter is the absolutely central role of the *kairos* lexicon, which depends on the awareness of the needs of philosophy, i.e. the conditions that it requires to be an effective political project. The *Seventh Letter* reveals a man forced to act by the best opportunity, without being really ready to do it as well as possible. In the letter Plato does not want to cover up his failure, but the reason for writing the letter was undoubtedly the urgency of defending himself against the charge of theoretical and political support for Dionysius' tyranny. This requires a two-pronged strategy involving both a *de facto* and a philosophical defense. The first, while important, could not be enough. Plato could not leave the idea that his philosophy is an incitement to tyranny unchallenged. But he could not defend himself merely by denying any material liability related to the Thirty, Dionysius, Dion and Callippus. Of course, Plato

states emphatically that he did not have any relationship with the Thirty, even though they tried to persuade him to join to the reign, and that Dionysius did not listen to him at all. He also denies that he urged Dion to take up arms against his own city, and he declares Callippus an unworthy citizen of Athens. But this was not sufficient to dispel all doubt. All those named (with the exception of the Thirty, who however were near to Socrates, "the most righteous man of his time," 324e2–3) seem to have found in Plato's philosophy something that would justify a tyrannical government. There was certainly no need for a careful reading of the *Republic* to know that according to Plato only those who know can govern with justice. But anyone who claimed to govern in the name of his philosophy became a tyrant and Plato himself had flirted with Dionysius. The *Seventh Letter* has the task of explaining to a non-philosophical audience that there is no link between Plato's theory and the tyrannical attitude of his interlocutors. The only two people who actually received a philosophical lesson, or at least an attempt, from Plato were Dion and Dionysius. Plato's argumentative strategy is rather refined. Dion was to all effects his pupil. Plato does not negate in any way the strong link between his teaching and Dion's opinions and actions. The letter is very clear about it. It is stated from the beginning. According to Plato, Dion was never a tyrant. He does not even mention the possibility. Dion wanted to offer to the Syracusans freedom and the best laws (324b1–2; 336a). It is not an exaggeration to say that Plato molded Dion into an unblemished philosophical hero against the tyranny of Dionysius. The whole Academy, throughout the course of its history, was devoted to his myth. According to Plutarch (*Mor.* 271e, 1061c), some philosophers even assumed his name out of respect and to emphasize their philosophical vocation. Already for Aristotle things were quite different. He praises Dion's courage in attacking Dionysius' militia (*Pol.* 5.1312a33–39; see also Demosth. *Adv. Lept.* [2] 162) but explains Callippus' reasons with balance (*Rhet.* 1.12.29). Modern historians are rather discriminating, even caustic. For instance, Freeman thinks Dion did not support a real democratic revolution, but he wanted to govern alone or with very few advisers, albeit in a good and rational way.[37] Beloch describes Dion as a man secretly interested just in power, and explains in this way the overthrow of Dionysius.[38] Glotz states that under Dion Syracuse just changed lords, not its political situation.[39] Sordi is also convinced that Dion was motivated by personal reasons and by a strong ambition to concentrate power in his own

37 Compare Pais 1925: 198–199.
38 Beloch 1902: 131.
39 Glotz 1941: 411.

hands; Platonic utopia was just a way to ennoble his political action.[40] Musti has no doubt that with Dion started "una nuova forma di tirannide," different in ideology but not less violent than Dionysius'.[41] Some scholars have instead defended the thesis that Dion attempted to implement Platonic reforms.[42] Probably we have to agree with Westlake: "Dion remains an enigmatic figure".[43] It is naïve to think that Dion's commendation by Plato is due only to his friendship or to the kindness to the addressees of the letter. It is part of the defensive strategy I have mentioned. At 335a ff. Plato claims to feel hatred for those who killed Dion as much as for Dionysius. In fact, both have done grave damage to Plato himself, and consequently to all men. Dionysius did so by refusing the opportunity to combine philosophy and power (φιλοσοφία τε καὶ δύναμις, 335d1–2) in the same person, showing in this way to all that no city nor man is happy, if they don't live wisely and according to justice, and those who killed Dion by eliminating a man who surely would put into practice his theory about freedom and good life. It is in this context that Plato *apertis verbis* calls Dion "just, courageous, wise and philosopher" (δικαίου τε καὶ ἀνδρείου καὶ σώφρονος καὶ φιλοσόφου, 336b1). Through this strategy Plato attests to the goodness of his own teachings: if Dion had the opportunity, he would have been a man able to create a rational and just government by virtue of his training in philosophy. Dionysius, on the contrary, rejected Plato's teaching, thus becoming a tyrant.

One of the most important things we learn from the *Seventh Letter*, in conclusion, is that if philosophical discourse is potentially endless, life is not. Philosophers must act, if the opportunity presents itself. This necessity deeply changes the relationship between knowing and acting of the *Republic*. It is surely right, as the *Republic* states, that the philosopher is compelled by the truth, but the translation of our theories into practical actions requires a strong compromise with reality. For example, we must be available to try to reform something we know to be rather recalcitrant, such as tyranny. Political actions is always a *second best*. We establish *paradeigmata* in our theoretical enterprise, but we need to act in a very defective world. When *kairos* happens, we can not know if we'll ever have another occasion. Although our knowledge is provisional, we have to act. So, with courage and responsibility, we act. For instance, we go to Syracuse to try to persuade a young, snooty, insolent tyrant. Obviously, we can fail, even disastrously. But we must not be

40 Sordi 1980: 254–255.
41 Musti 1989: 579.
42 For instance, see Tenca 1932 and Berve 1957: 141.
43 Westlake 1994: 705.

ashamed of this. The real shame is not even to try. And this is one of Plato's greatest lessons.

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CHAPTER 5

Learning from the Gods: Episteme and Politics in Plato's *Menexenus*

Emilia Cucinotta

Abstract

In the *Menexenus* the dead soldiers' reference to *episteme* among goods whose value is positive only if virtue-oriented raises two closely interwoven issues: the question of the possible, albeit not necessary, identity of knowledge with wisdom and, more broadly, the problem of the nature of the knowledge Plato attributes to Athenian citizens of the *Menexenus*. The *episteme* the dead refer to does not coincide with the philosopher's *episteme*, intended as ultimate achievement of dialectical *paideia* of philosopher-kings in the *Republic*, and yet, though originating from a different cause, it produces the same outcomes when informed by virtue. In a city without philosophers, yet molded by the gods, divine education plays the role accorded to philosophical *paideia* in Kallipolis. In the *Menexenus* the relationship between *arete* and *episteme* is overturned when compared to its Socratic and dialectical treatment in early and middle dialogues, for Plato represents here an ideal Athens whose autochthonous citizens ground their knowledge not on philosophical inquiry but on the first teaching of gods and their inborn virtue.

1 Introduction

Among Plato's works the *Menexenus* is definitely, to quote Charles Kahn, "the most enigmatic of all Plato's writings,"[1] a judgment which even amplifies, if possible, Paul Friedländer's opinion that the dialogue is "die verwirrendste Schrift Platons, und, unter seinen vielen Sokratesbildern, das paradoxeste."[2] In the *Menexenus* Socrates does play an unusual role. Leaving aside the brief

1 Kahn 1963: 220–234, on account of the problems the dialogue raises, speaks of "the riddle of the *Menexenus*," since it "presents us not with one puzzle, but with a whole series of them; and the reader cannot feel that he has fully understood Plato's meaning until he has been able to find a satisfactory solution to each one" (p. 220).

2 Friedländer 1964[3]: 202. For Vlastos 1964: 164–203, the dialogue is "a philological puzzle" (p. 188). See also Müller 1991: 140–156, according to whom the *Menexenus* is one of the "ungeliebten Kindern der modernen Platonforschung" (p. 140).

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conversation with his young friend Menexenus at the beginning and the briefer one at the end of the dialogue, Socrates is portrayed as an elderly student of rhetoric delivering a political speech, a picture in contrast with both his self-proclaimed rhetorical ineptitude and the apolitical life he usually endorses in Plato's dialogues.[3] As a result of this and other anomalies, such as patent anachronisms, fabrication of history (with distortions and omissions in the narrative section),[4] and the authority given to Aspasia as Socrates' teacher in rhetoric and father of the *logos*,[5] the *Menexenus* has been interpreted as a mockery of funeral orations through the literary device of irony.[6] Yet, labeled as ironic and interpreted as a parody, the dialogue loses its place and importance among dialogues in which Plato introduces new paradigms of good *politeiai*, namely the reformed *politeia* of the *Republic*, the portrayal of ancient Athens in the *Critias*, and the new *politeia* of Magnesia conceived in the *Laws*. Among the paradigms of good *politeiai* should be included the fictional account of pseudo-historical Athens in the *Menexenus*, which is to be interpreted as closely related to that of Athens in the *Critias*: in both dialogues can be traced Plato's serious interest in (pseudo-)historical accounts as a means to reconcile philosophical research with literary production.[7]

In his *La metafisica della storia*, Konrad Gaiser well understand this point, when he includes the *Menexenus* among the dialogues in which Plato shows

3 Both rhetorical ineptitude and apolitical life are the distinguishing features Plato' attributes to Socrates in his self-portrait in the *Apology* (17a1–18a6 and 31c4–32a3). See Strycker–Slings 1994: 28–36, and for a useful overview on Socrates' political engagement see Demont 2009: 43–54. On the political background upon which Plato grounds Socrates' defence in the *Apology* see Waterfield 2013: 1–19: 13–19.

4 See Bloedow 1975: 32–48, Henderson 1975: 25–46, Clavaud 1980: 127–167, Pownall 2004: 38–64, and Pappas–Zelcer 2015: 182–213.

5 For Aspasia, the well-known companion of Pericles, see Bicknell 1982: 240–250, Henry 1995: 9–56, Podlecki 1998: 109–117, Nails 2002: 58–62, Tulli 2007: 303–317, Pappas–Zelcer 2015: 31–37. On her pivotal, much-discussed role within the dialogue see Scholl 1959: 16–19 and 99–117, Kahn 1963: 220–234: 220–222, Bloedow 1975: 32–48, Clavaud 1980: 251–259, Coventry 1989: 1–15: 3, Rosenstock 1994: 331–347: 341–344, Collins–Stauffer 1999: 85–115: 92–95, Long 2003: 49–69, Tulli 2003: 91–116, and Heitsch 2009: 229–236.

6 See Berndt 1881, Taylor 1937^{4}, 41–45, Dodds 1959: 23–24, Vlastos 1964: 164–203, Henderson 1975, Bloedow 1975, Clavaud 1980, Coventry 1989, Loraux 1993^{2}, Yunis 1996: 138–139, Tsitsiridis 1998, Trivigno 2009: 29–58, and Engels 2012: 13–30. See also Capra 1998: 183–192. For serious purposes of the dialogue see Wilamowitz 1920: 126–143, Harder 1934: 492–500, Scholl 1959, Huby 1957: 104–114, Löwenclau 1961, Thurow 1968, Kennedy 1963: 154–164, Kahn 1963: 220–234, Duffy 1983: 79–93, Salkever 199: 133–143, Collins–Stauffer 1999: 85–115, Monoson 2000: 181–205, Tulli 2003: 91–116, and Tulli 2007: 321–329.

7 For the treatment of historical facts in the *Menexenus* in relation to the standards for literature in the *Republic* see Kennedy 1963: 161–164. On the ethical function of ideal history see Tulli 2003: 91–101.

the close relationship between virtue and good *politeiai* throughout history.[8] The simultaneous process of progress and decline (due to the temporal gap that progressively separates men from the gods) which Gaiser points out in his interpretation of the *Statesman*'s myth is in full evidence also in the description of the birth and development of the state in book II of the *Republic* (369a6–376c6), in the prologue of the *Timaeus* (25a6–d6), in the *logos Atlantikos* of the *Critias*, in the constitutional enquiry in Book III of the *Laws,* and in the historical account of Athenian history in the *Menexenus* (238b1–239b3).[9] Gaiser's reading of the dialogues in which Plato considers remote and recent history still has merit, among many other aspects, in highlighting the importance that history and historical accounts have in Plato's work, especially considering the close yet problematic relationship between philosophical research, correct literary *paideia*, and the actual government of the *polis*.

Plato directly approaches Athenian history in the *Critias* and in the *Menexenus*, in the former through the prose poetry on the war Athens fought against Atlantis, and in the latter through the epideictic rhetoric of the epitaph. Both being encomia on *agathoi andres*, the Aspasian oration as well as the *Atlantikos logos* fulfil Socrates' norms established for poetic genres admitted into the ideal state of the *Republic*, according to which only hymns for the gods and encomia for virtuous men will be admitted (607a3–5).[10] In the opening conversation of Plato's *Timaeus*, Socrates gives his interlocutors, Timaeus, Hermocrates, and Critias, a summary of the dialogue on the ideal state they had the day before (17a–19b2).[11] With regard to the state they envisaged, Socrates feels like someone who has gazed on beautiful creatures at rest and conceives the desire to see them in motion, exercising in competition some aspects of what he imagines to be their nature. So he would like to hear now an account from someone amongst his partners about the ideal city in wartime, its citizens displaying qualities appropriate to their upbringing, *trophe*, and education, *paideia*

8 Gaiser 1991^2 explains the development of human knowledge as the outcome of the relationship between progress and decline throughout history. As the founding myths in the *Statesman* (268d5–274e1) and *Protagoras* show (320c8–322d5), at the beginning of human history the gods taught men *technai* for sustenance, from which they developed a higher knowledge, the *techne politike* first and then philosophical knowledge.

9 See Gaiser 1991^2: 111–121.

10 On the relationship between the *logos Atlantikos* and the norms for poetry in Book 10 of the *Republic* see Johansen 2004: 30–35: "the objective of the *Timaeus–Critias* is to tell a knowledgeable story about the deeds of virtuous men of the sort that the *Republic* would sanction" (p. 35).

11 On the problematic relationship between the prologue of the *Timaeus* and the *Republic* see Clay 1997: 49–54, Thesleff 1997: 519–540, Schofield 1999: 28–29, Vegetti 1999: 13–27, and Ferrari 2012: 99–112.

(19c2–8),[12] hence the account of Ancient Athens narrated by Critias fulfilling Socrates' appeal for a praise of *agathoi andres* in action. A similar desire must have led Plato to incorporate into the dialogue form the epideictic rhetoric of the *epitaphios logos*,[13] a rhetorical and literary genre in which the account of military events plays a central role in displaying the virtue of the city and its citizens. Due to its encomiastic nature and purpose, it is not surprising that in the *Menexenus* Plato gives a eulogy in prose honouring *agathoi andres*, considering solely the importance and literary function attributed to hymns and encomia in the *Republic*, which are, due to their correct subject of *mimesis*, the only literature admitted into the ideal city of Kallipolis for the *paideia* of its citizens. Consistent with the paideutic function of encomiastic literature in the *Republic*, the *Atlantikos logos* delivered by Critias represents a fictional yet trustworthy encomium on Archaic Athens. Similarly, the funeral oration of the *Menexenus* is to be regarded as a pseudo-historical yet trustworthy encomium on Classical Athens, its virtuous men, deeds, and righteous policy.

Within this interpretative framework, I will examine the philosophical aims which are to be seen in the representation of an unhistorical, ideal Athens in the *Menexenus*. Taking into account the relationship between the inborn virtues attributed to Athens' earthborn citizens and the extraordinary role of gods as teachers at the beginning of Athenian history, I will propose an interpretation of the reference to *episteme* in the prosopopoeia. With this aim, I will consider two sections from the Aspasian speech: first, the orator's praise of the Athenians' extraordinary birth and education, then a passage from the dead fathers' exhortation to virtue.

2 Gods as First Teachers and Rulers of Autochthonous Athenians

The *Menexenus* divides into two parts of unequal length: the frame, which consists of the opening and closing dialogues between Socrates and the young Menexenus,[14] and the funeral oration attributed to Aspasia within it. In the opening scene, Socrates runs across Menexenus as the latter is returning from the Bouleuterion, which is about to select the orator who will deliver the funeral

12 On the desire expressed here by Socrates see Regali 2012: 48–50. For a different point of view see the discussion in Broadie 2012: 44–51.

13 For incorporation of genres of poetry and rhetoric in Plato's dialogues see Nightingale 1995: 1–12 and 93–107.

14 For Menexenus see Nails 2002: 202–203. Rosenstock 1994: 331–347, and Dean-Jones 1995: 51–57, believe Menexenus is to be identified with a son of Socrates bearing the same name.

oration for the Athenians who have fallen in war. Socrates promptly launches himself into a eulogy for the epitaph as a genre, which shows how the orators can make anyone who died in battle seem noble by attributing to the dead qualities they may or may not have been endowed with. For the present occasion, Menexenus remarks that by the time the choice is made the speaker will almost have to improvise his speech, having very little time to compose the oration. Socrates comments that this won't be difficult at all, because funeral speeches follow a predictable pattern,[15] and, besides, it is not a great challenge to praise Athenians in front of an Athenian audience (235d3–4).[16] Menexenus then asks whether Socrates could manage to deliver a funeral oration, and what he would have to say if he were chosen. Socrates answers that he would say perhaps nothing of his own but that the day before he heard Aspasia, his teacher in rhetoric, going through a funeral speech for the same dead soldiers, and that he had committed this speech to memory.[17] Menexenus wants him to narrate it, and Socrates agrees and begins to recite Aspasia's funeral oration. The body of the dialogue is largely a fictional funeral oration Plato composed as an example of what should be said at a public funeral.[18]

In the proem of the speech, after recalling the concrete ceremonies due to the dead soldiers (236d4–6), Plato refers to the function of the funeral speech

15 See Kennedy 1963: 154–158, and Loraux 1993²: 233–274.

16 In Book 1 of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle ascribes to Socrates the saying that it is not difficult to praise Athenians among Athenians (1367b8–9) and in Book 3 he repeats again that Socrates said in the *epitaphios* that it is not difficult to praise Athenians among Athenians but among Spartans (1415b30–32).

17 Socrates explains that Aspasia composed the epitaph by gluing together leftovers, περιλείμματα, from the funeral oration of Pericles she herself composed (23a8–b6). The precise relation Plato establishes between his funeral oration and that of Pericles is not without significance. In explicitly associating the two orations, Plato aims at providing an alternative portrait of Athens in clear contrast with the picture given by Thucydides (2.35–46). Dionysius of Halicarnassus was the first to claim that Plato was parodying Thucydides in the *Menexenus* (*Dem.* 23.10). On the relationship between Plato's *Menexenus* and Thucydides' work, see Scholl 1959: 99–117, Löwenclau 1961: 34–36, Kahn 1963: 220–234: 221–223, Salkever 1993: 133–143: 133–135, Monoson 2000: 181–205: 181–189, Collins–Stauffer 1999: 85–115: 92–93, Tulli 2003: 91–106, Kerch 2008: 94–114: 99–105, and Eucken 2008: 7–51.

18 In rewriting and improving the literary genre of the epitaph, Plato offers "an analysis of the faults of the rhetoric and politics which it represents. Inasmuch as this analysis grounds the faults in neglect of philosophy, it points to the figure of the philosopher as the true statesman," as Coventry 1989: 1–15: 4, puts it. Against Nightingale 1995: 5, who claims that when "Plato engages with a given genre of discourse, his stance is usually adversarial," since "Plato uses intertextuality as a vehicle for criticizing traditional genres of discourse and, what is more important, for introducing and defining a radically different discursive practice, which he calls 'philosophy'."

within the ritual of Athenian public burial, thus giving his own definition of the epitaph as a genre (236e3–237a1):

> δεῖ δὴ τοιούτου τινὸς λόγου ὅστις τοὺς μὲν τετελευτηκότας ἱκανῶς ἐπαινέσεται, τοῖς δὲ ζῶσιν εὐμενῶς παραινέσεται, ἐκγόνοις μὲν καὶ ἀδελφοῖς μιμεῖσθαι τὴν τῶνδε ἀρετὴν παρακελευόμενος, πατέρας δὲ καὶ μητέρας καὶ εἴ τινες τῶν ἄνωθεν ἔτι προγόνων λείπονται, τούτους δὲ παραμυθούμενος.
>
> Such a speech must adequately praise those who have died, and graciously counsel those who are living, urging children and brothers to imitate the virtue of the ones who lie before them, and consoling fathers, mothers and any other surviving ancestors.[19]

The function of a *logos epitaphios* is twofold: to praise, ἐπαινέσεται, the dead and exhort, παραινέσεται, those who are still alive to imitate, μιμεῖσθαι, the virtue shown by the dead, τὴν τῶνδε ἀρετήν. Intended as parenetic speech praise aiming at offering virtuous models to imitate, Aspasia's epitaph is consistent with the norms established for poetry within the educational system of Kallipolis. In Book 10 of the *Republic* (607a3–5), Socrates claims that the literary works admitted into the ideal city must express a correct *mimesis* of gods and virtuous men:[20] thus only hymns and encomia represent the adequate literature to achieve the purpose of correct *paideia*, which is to foster virtue in private and political life.

A close relationship between proper education and virtuous political conduct is highlighted in the programmatic summary of the funeral speech. Here Plato clearly points out a direct link between the Athenians' birth and education and their political deeds, whose virtuous outcomes are said to depend on the upbringing and education they received (237a4–b2):

> δοκεῖ μοι χρῆναι κατὰ φύσιν, ὥσπερ ἀγαθοὶ ἐγένοντο, οὕτω καὶ ἐπαινεῖν αὐτούς. ἀγαθοὶ δὲ ἐγένοντο διὰ τὸ φῦναι ἐξ ἀγαθῶν. τὴν εὐγένειαν οὖν πρῶτον αὐτῶν ἐγκωμιάζωμεν, δεύτερον δὲ τροφήν τε καὶ παιδείαν· ἐπὶ δὲ τούτοις τὴν τῶν ἔργων πρᾶξιν ἐπιδείξωμεν, ὡς καλὴν καὶ ἀξίαν τούτων ἀπεφήναντο.[21]

19 I quote the *Menexenus* throughout in Collins–Stauffer's 1999 translation (sometimes slightly modified).

20 See Giuliano 2005: 118–129.

21 For the meaning of τούτων in this passage I follow Tsitsiridis 1998: 195, who traslates: "ihrer edlen Abkunft und Erziehung."

> It seems to me that as they were good one ought naturally to praise them as such; and they were good because they grew from the good. Let us, therefore, pay an encomium first to their excellent birth, and, second, to their nurture and education; after this, let us describe the doing of their deeds, how beautifully they displayed it and how worthy it was of their upbringing and education.

The summary indicates the main sections of the speech: the praise of the Athenians' exceptional status, in regard both to their excellent birth and education, and the account of historical deeds, whose illustration is meant to prove how the Athenians' virtuous deeds derive from the upbringing and education they received.[22] The *encomion* of the good lineage, εὐγένεια, of the dead is grounded on the praise of the superiority of their native land, praised as an authentic mother, which generated and fed ἀγαθοί citizens, ἀγαθοὶ δὲ ἐγένοντο διὰ τὸ φῦναι ἐξ ἀγαθῶν. Through the reference to the Athenians' autochthony (237b2–c3),[23] the eulogy of the citizens originates first and foremost from the praise of the earth the Athenians sprang from and were nourished by (237c3–4).[24] Attica is depicted as an estimable land, ἀξία χώρα, which deserves praise because it is loved by the gods, θεοφιλής (237c5–7),[25] and, second, because at the time when the whole earth was giving forth tame and wild animals, the region of Attica brought forth man, who alone recognizes justice and the gods, καὶ δίκην καὶ θεοὺς μόνον νομίζει (237d2–e1).[26] In addition to their extraordinary birth and inborn qualities, from which originates a unique, unparalleled disposition towards justice and piety, Plato introduces the Athenians' divine education as a further element of excellence. After having brought them up to adulthood, the land herself gave the Athenians the gods to be their rulers, ἄρχοντες, and teachers, διδάσκαλοι (238b1–6):

22 It is not surprising that the summary, which works as *propositio thematis*, does not include the final exhortation, being an epitaph formally an *enkomion*. For the summary see Berndt 1881: 45–48, and Tsitsiridis 1998: 58–63.

23 On the origin of the Athenian claim of autochthony as an ideological tool in funeral oration see discussion in Rosivach 1987: 294–306. For the function of the myth of autochthony in the *Menexenus* see also Löwenclau 1961: 51–62, Loraux 2000: 13–27, Tsitsiridis 1998: 196–200, and Pappas–Zelcer 2015: 157–175.

24 On the relationship between intellectual qualities and biological purity in this passage see Harder 1934: 492–500.

25 And this is proved by the strife and quarrel, ἔρις τε καὶ κρίσις, of the gods who disputed over her. On the variations on the pattern of strife of the gods as a motive of praise in Plato's *Menexenus* and *Critias* and in Euripides (*e.g. Ione* 1433–1436) see Regali 2012: 128.

26 See Löwenclau 1961: 59–60.

> θρεψαμένη δὲ καὶ αὐξήσασα πρὸς ἥβην ἄρχοντας καὶ διδασκάλους αὐτῶν θεοὺς ἐπηγάγετο· ὧν τὰ μὲν ὀνόματα πρέπει ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε ἐᾶν – ἴσμεν γάρ[27] – οἳ τὸν βίον ἡμῶν κατεσκεύασαν πρός τε τὴν καθ' ἡμέραν δίαιταν,[28] τέχνας πρώτους παιδευσάμενοι καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς χώρας φυλακὴν ὅπλων κτῆσίν τε καὶ χρῆσιν διδαξάμενοι.[29]

> Having nurtured and brought them up to youth, she led forth the gods to be their rulers and teachers – the names of whom it is fitting to leave out in this instance, since we know them – and they equipped us to live, educating us in the basic arts for the supply of our daily life, and teaching us the acquisition and use of arms for the defense of the land.

Like the *technai* for sustenance, the extraordinary education Athenians received from the gods finds its main purpose in the defense of the country, in this singling out the model of defensive war, πρὸς τὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς χώρας φυλακήν, for the city of the *Menexenus*. The emphasis given to the Athenians' autochthony and the education aiming at the defence of the country recall the Phoenician tale addressed to the inhabitants of Kallipolis in Book 3 of the *Republic*. The first section of the noble lie,[30] a useful and beneficial ψεῦδος ἐν τοῖς λόγοις for the citizens of Socrates' reformed city (2. 382c7), displays common features with the account of Athenians' autochthony in the *Menexenus*, and shares the same purposes, on the modest assumption that the aim of the autochthony tale in the *Republic* is to persuade the guardians to defend the country as their mother and to take care of the citizens as their brothers born from the same earth, ἀδελφοὶ ὄντες καὶ γηγενεῖς (3. 414d1–e5). The commitment to the defense of the country and citizens, which is the aim of the noble lie in the *Republic* and is represented by the autochthonous Athenians defending Athens against Atlantis in the *Critias*, accounts for the importance of the autochthony myth in the eulogy of the *Menexenus*, where an unhistorical virtuous Athens is portrayed fighting only defensive wars. From this point of view, the Athens described in the *Menexenus* closely recalls the ancient Athens depicted in the *Critias*: in both accounts we recognise the same attitude towards defensive war. In clear contrast both with Atlantis in the *Critias* and the others Greek cities

27 For ἴσμεν γάρ see Tsitsiridis 1998: 217–218, and Petrucci 2014: 36–41.

28 Correctly, Tsitsiridis 1998: 218, takes away the comma after the term δίαιταν, for the sequence πρός τε τὴν καθ' ἡμέραν δίαιταν relates to the participle παιδευσάμενοι.

29 The participles παιδευσάμενοι and διδαξάμενοι are to be interpreted as 'kausatives Medium': see Kühner–Gerth 1898^3: I 108–109.

30 On the function of the noble lie see Schofield 2007: 138–164, and Van Noorden 2010: 176–199.

in the *Menexenus*, the distinguishing feature of Athenian policy is represented not by military expansion, but – contrary to historical data – by the defense of the country and freedom of the citizens.

Whereas Athenian autochthony is a recurring theme in funeral orations,[31] though particularly developed in the *Menexenus*,[32] in no other extant funeral oration does education occupy so much space and importance. And, above all, there is no reference to the gods as teachers in the extant epitaphs. Plato also refers to the same role of the gods in leading and educating autochthonous Athenians in the *Atlantikos logos* narrated in the *Critias*. At the beginning of the section on the birth of Athens, Critias recounts how in a faraway past the gods received their due portions over the entire earth, how they began to settle their lands, and raise their inhabitants by means of persuasion and without violence, as Hephaestus and Athena did in their common possession of Attica (109b1–d2). Athena and Hephaestus, in all likelihood the unnamed gods in the *Menexenus*, are said to have produced virtuous men, ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς ἐμποιήσαντες, sprung from the land itself, αὐτόχθονας, and to have implanted in their minds the order of the government, ἐπὶ νοῦν ἔθεσαν τὴν τῆς πολιτείας τάξιν (109d1–2).[33] Moreover, in the *Menexenus* the Athenians' autochthony plays a central role also in displaying the virtue of the citizens. As in the *Critias* Athena and Hephaestus produced ἄνδρες ἀγαθοί born from a land naturally suited for virtue and wisdom, τήνδε τὴν χώραν εἰλήχατον ὡς οἰκείαν καὶ πρόσφορον ἀρετῇ καὶ φρονήσει πεφυκυῖαν (109c9–d1),[34] in the *Menexenus* the citizens are praised *qua* ἀγαθοί, for they sprung from ἀγαθοί descendants of those autochthonous Athenians (237a1–6) born of an ἀξία and θεοφιλής land (237c5–7). Furthermore, just as the born of the earth citizens of Ancient Athens of the *Critias* receive the order of government from the gods (109d1–2), in the *Menexenus* the autochthonous Athenians' extraordinary inborn disposition toward virtue is strengthened by the proper education they receive from the gods, who are their first rulers and teachers, and on whose teachings as well as their nurture

31 Löwenclau 1961: 52, points out that "Bei Platon ist die Autochthonie der Athener nicht ein im rhetorischen Gebrauch verblaßtes, fast selbständiges Motiv, sondern der notwendige Ausdruck dafür, daß sich das Wesen der attischen Erde ihren Kindern mitteilt."

32 See Clavaud 1980: 117–118.

33 On this basis, Löwenclau 1961: 68, maintains that the ideal Athens of the *Critias* corresponds to the city praised in the *Menexenus*: "Im ‚Kritias' geben Athene und Hephaistos den erdgeborenen Urathenern ‚die Ordnung der Verfassung in den Sinn'[…] Im ‚Menexenos' schaffen sich die Vorfahren zwar selber ihre Staatsverfassung, aber doch unter dem unmittelbaren Einfluß ihrer Herkunft und Erziehung (γεννηθέντες δὲ καὶ παιδευθέντες οὕτως 238 B7)."

34 On this passage see Nesselrath 2006: 141–142.

their constitution is established, γεννηθέντες δὲ καὶ παιδευθέντες οὕτως οἱ τῶνδε πρόγονοι ᾤκουν πολιτείαν κατασκευασάμενοι (238b7–8). As in the encomium of Ancient Athens in the *Critias*, the eulogy of Athenians' deeds in the *Menexenus* is grounded on the claim of their autochthony and divine education.[35] In both dialogues the Athenians' virtuous outcomes depend on the role played by the gods in their education: in both accounts the divine *paideia* provides the bases for Athens' virtuous policy.

It is worth noting that in the accounts of the foundation of Athens in the *Menexenus* and in the *Critias* the teaching of the gods is the counterpart of Kallipolis' educational system, which culminates in the *paideia* of the philosophers, the only ones entrusted with the task of preserving the laws and the customs of Socrates' reformed city (6. 484b4–11).[36] According to the biggest and most difficult of the three waves (5. 472a1–7),[37] philosophers should be the rulers of Kallipolis, in order for the ideal state to be realized (5. 473c6–e4 and 6. 499b1–c5). What enables the philosophers to govern is knowledge of forms, and mainly the form of the good, the μέγιστον μάθημα,[38] by relation to which just things and the others become useful and beneficial for the city (6. 504e3–b3).[39] What distinguishes the few philosophers from the many

35 On the relationship between the *Timaeus–Critias* and the *Menexenus*, Monoson 2000: 202–205, claims that in Critias' account of Atlantis story "the description of the Platonic city in history [...] takes the form of a eulogy of Athenian ancestors, which displays many parallels to the concerns of a funeral oration" (p. 204).

36 According to Vegetti 2003: 26, "L'educazione può condurre l'anima verso forme di conoscenza più elevate – più oggettivamente vere e stabili –, e verso l'acquisizione di criteri di valore non arbitrari e soggettivi, perché fondati su quella conoscenza, e perciò stesso più capaci di garantire una vita privata e pubblica più 'felice'. Questa è l'ascesa morale e intellettuale che i prigionieri della caverna possono compiere se aiutati (o costretti) da un'educazione adeguata, sia essa stessa opera di un individuo eccezionale (è senza dubbio adombrata la figura di Socrate), di un gruppo filosofico adeguato (l'Accademia?), o di una intera città riformata."

37 On the simile see Sedley 2005: 205–214.

38 Against the interpretation which attributes to Plato in the *Republic* the 'two world theory', which denies the possibility of reaching stable knowledge of politics, see Fine 1990: 85–115: "once one knows the forms, one can apply this knowledge to sensibles so as to know them too; the philosopher's knowledge of forms, for instance, helps him to know (although it is not, all by itself, sufficient for knowing) which laws ought to be enacted" (p. 86). On Socrates' much debated argument on behalf of the philosopher-kings at the end of Book 5 (476d-480a) of the *Republic* in relation to the similes of the ship of state and the cave see Sedley 2007: 256–283, who maintains that the knowledge philosophers will resort to in ruling the city will be "in its essential character … mathematical knowledge [...]. Its focus is the mathematical principles of proportionality on which all lower values ultimately depend" (p. 270).

39 Ferrari 2013: 155–172, underscores the causal function of the μέγιστον μάθημα as well as its 'practical' nature: "the Good, causing the usefulness of the objects on which it acts,

non-philosophers is the different cognitive relation each group maintains with the domains of fallible, unstable opinion and reliable steady knowledge of what *is* (7. 533c8–535a2). In order for the completely virtuous city Socrates has correctly founded (4. 427e6–7) to be σοφὴ καὶ εὔβουλος, the government should belong to those few who share in the knowledge that alone is to be called σοφία (4. 428b4–429a7), namely knowledge of the good, which, we are told, pertains only to philosophers. The knowledge the philosopher-kings acquire by means of their philosophical education in the *Republic* corresponds to the knowledge with which the citizens of the Athens described both in the *Menexenus* and in the *Critias* are endowed due to the teaching of the gods. With the gods as teachers at the beginning of its history, the unhistorical ideal Athens portrayed in the *Menexenus* turn out to be, so to speak, philosophical, that is oriented toward virtue, just as ancient Athens turns out to have been in the *Critias*, yet without being ruled by philosophers, as Kallipolis is in the *Republic*, where on the contrary gods do not play any role in the philosopher-kings' education. From this point of view the models of virtuous Athens portrayed in the *logoi* delivered by Critias and Socrates are to be interpreted as alternatives to the model of virtuous *politeia* envisaged in the *Republic*. Starting from the first teaching of the gods, the Athenians of the unhistorical ideal Athens of the *Menexenus* develop the knowledge the dead fathers talk about in their exhortative speech, which I will now discuss.

3 The Exhortation to Virtue

Among extant epitaphs,[40] only Plato's funeral oration contains a prosopopoeia, a rhetorical device in which an imaginary, absent or – as in our text – dead character is represented as speaking.[41] In this section Aspasia reports the

makes them desirable and, for this reason, objects towards which one tends. The fact that the Good represents also the ultimate reference point for the individuals called upon to govern the city leads us to think that the finality of human actions must be essentially understood within a practical and political horizon" (p. 156). See also Vegetti 2013: 137–154.

40 The number of surviving epitaphs from the fifth and fourth centuries is small: a fragment of a funeral speech by Gorgias (82 B 5–6 D.–K.), the epitaphs attributed to Lysias (2) and Demosthenes (60), Pericles' funeral oration as given by Thucydides (2.36.1), and the funeral speech by Hypereides (7). On the form and function of the *epitaphios* see Ziolkowski 1981, and Loraux 1993².

41 Prosopopoeia is adopted by Plato also in the *Crito* (50a6–54d2), in the *Protagoras* (361a5–c2), in the *Theaetetus* (166a2–168c2), in the *Phaedrus* (237b7–241d1), in Book 8 of the *Republic* (546a1–547a6), notably in the *Laws* (e.g. 741a7–b6), and in *Letter 8* (355a1–6), where Plato impersonates Dion's voice joining him in addressing his friends: Löwenclau 1961:

words the fathers pronounced as they were about to risk their lives, a message they enjoined to announce to the survivors, should anything happen to them (246c2–4).[42] The last message of the fallen fathers consists of a lengthy exhortation and consolation in which they first address the children (246d1–247c4), then their parents (247c5–248d2), and finally the city (248d2–6). Although the scant number of surviving epitaphs prevent stating this with certainty, it seems very likely that Plato may have introduced the prosopopoeia as an innovation in the epitaph literary form.[43] Reporting the impressive direct speech of the fathers, Plato widens the boundaries of the orator's expected exhortation and consolation, which immediately follows and concludes the funeral speech (248d7–249c6). Moreover, by joining the orator's voice with that of dead fathers speaking from afterlife, Plato makes the ones who did display their excellence in defending Athens pronounce the exhortation, thus strengthening the effects of the speech on the addressees of the oration.

At this point in Aspasia's speech, Socrates wears the mask of the fathers and speaks on behalf of the dead. In this section, Plato gives his funeral speech a theatrical feature, appointing, so to speak, the chorus of the fathers the task of pronouncing with their own voices the exhortation and consolation, and thus getting Socrates to play the role of coryphaeus. The mask of the dead father is not inappropriate for Socrates, if we merely consider that, at this point of the epitaph, Socrates is speaking technically after his death,[44] considering that the events he relates in the historical narrative section go up to the King's peace in 386 BC, that is, long after Socrates has died.[45]

110, notes that "Auch die Prosopopoiie des ‚Menexenos' will als ‚gemeinsamer Rat' des Sokrates und der Gefallenen verstanden sein [...] wobei Sokrates – wie Platon im 8. Brief – scheinbar selber zurücktritt und sich nur als Boten versteht [...], der die Mahnrede von der Gefallenen zu ihren Lebzeiten ‚gehört' haben will." See Tsitsiridis 1998: 372–373, and, on ancient interpretation of Plato's use of prosopopoeia, Charalabopoulos 2012: 117–118.

42 That is, the words they said before they took the field, which Aspasia heard and put into her *epitaphios logos* together with the words the fathers would be glad now to say if they had the power (246c4–8). On Plato reporting direct speech in his narrative as Thucydides does in his *History* see Monoson 2000: 186–187.

43 See Rosenstock 1994: 331–347: 336.

44 To solve the problem of such an anachronism, Rosenstock 1994: 331–347, suggests that Socrates is to be considered a revenant. See also Dean-Jones 1995: 51–57.

45 In the *Menexenus*, the historical account of Athenian history ends with the Corinthian war, a conflict lasting from 395 until 386 BC: with patent anachronism Plato makes Socrates speak 12 years after his death in 399. Pownall 2004: 48, argues that "Plato's use of anachronism seems akin to his technique of the noble lie, a fiction that in the interests of moral truth transcends the bounds of factual accuracy. Thus, he uses the device of anachronism as a reminder to look beneath the transparently fictional surface for the underlying moral truth."

Even commentators who highlight the general ironic point of view of the funeral speech acknowledge a serious tone in the prosopopoeia,[46] and some scholars point out that the fathers' speech displays genuinely Socratic and Platonic themes,[47] such as the unity of virtues, in the exhortation to children, and a reference to self-reliance through the mention of the Delphic injunction to moderation, μηδὲν ἄγαν (247e5), when consoling the parents. For the purpose of the present study I will consider a passage from the exhortation to virtue in the speech of the dead, where the injunction to the sons to act with virtue in all aspects of life raises the issue of the relation of knowledge to virtue in the city portrayed in the *Menexenus.*

At the beginning of the prosopopoeia, after stating the importance of choosing to die nobly instead of living ignobly (246d2–3),[48] the fathers urge the children to remember their words as an exhortation to virtue, not only in wartime but in every single aspect of their lives, for without virtue any good and activity is to be considered evil. At the end of an ascending *gradatio* of goods the fathers place knowledge, which they consider a deceptive skill when bereft of justice and the rest of the virtue (246d8–247a2):

> χρὴ οὖν μεμνημένους τῶν ἡμετέρων λόγων, ἐάν τι καὶ ἄλλο ἀσκῆτε, ἀσκεῖν μετ' ἀρετῆς, εἰδότας ὅτι τούτου λειπόμενα πάντα καὶ κτήματα καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα αἰσχρὰ καὶ κακά. οὔτε γὰρ πλοῦτος κάλλος φέρει τῷ κεκτημένῳ μετ' ἀνανδρίας – ἄλλῳ γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος πλουτεῖ καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτῷ – οὔτε σώματος κάλλος καὶ ἰσχὺς δειλῷ καὶ κακῷ συνοικοῦντα πρέποντα φαίνεται ἀλλ' ἀπρεπῆ, καὶ ἐπιφανέστερον ποιεῖ τὸν ἔχοντα καὶ ἐκφαίνει τὴν δειλίαν· πᾶσά τε ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς πανουργία, οὐ σοφία φαίνεται.

> You must remember our words, and even if you should practice something else, practice it with virtue, knowing that without this all possession and

46 Henderson 1975: 25–46: 45, Coventry 1989: 1–15: 15, Salkever 1993: 133–143: 140, Collins–Stauffer 1999: 85–115: 90–92, and Monoson 2000: 199.

47 See Scholl 1959: 59–67, Löwenclau 1961: 107–126, Kahn 1963: 220–234: 229, Henderson 1975: 25–46: 45–46, Salkever 1993: 129–140, Gaiser 1991[2]: 113–116: 115 n. 13, Rosenstock 1994: 331–347, Monoson 2000: 199.202. For a different perspective on this section see Collins–Stauffer 1999: 104–109.

48 For the *prohairesis* of the dead and the theme of fine death in Greek epitaphs see Loraux 1993[2]: 120–141. In following Wolff 1929, Tsitsiridis 1998: 373, rightly notes that "Die Prohairesis ist auch die konstitutive Form für große Teile der platonischen Ap.[ologie]." Rosenstock 1994: 331–347: 344–347, points out a "close thematic affiliation between the *Apology* and the *Menexenus*," because "each dialogue presents a facet of the Platonic representation of Socrates and each calls upon the other in order for the full import of the 'judgement of Socrates' to be understood" (p. 346). See also Monoson 2000: 199–200.

> pursuits are shameful and base. For neither does wealth bestow beauty to the one who possesses it with cowardice – such a man is rich for another, not for himself – nor do beauty and strength of the body, when dwelling in a cowardly and evil person, appear seemly but unseemly, and make the one who has them more conspicuous and reveal his cowardice; and all knowledge, when severed from justice and the rest of virtue, reveals itself as knavery, not wisdom.

With the message of the fathers to the children, Plato claims the essential role of virtue, ἀσκεῖν μετ᾽ ἀρετῆς, not only in wartime but in every aspect of life, in this widening the meaning of the reference to *arete* from 'excellence in battle' to a comprehensive concept of excellence, which involves the whole of virtue, not only courage. The addressees of the exhortation are said to know, εἰδότες, that all possessions and pursuits, πάντα καὶ κτήματα καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα, are shameful and base, αἰσχρὰ καὶ κακά, without virtue, and that even knowledge turn out to be a deceitful skill when severed from justice and the other virtue.[49] To citizens who know, εἰδότες, the fundamental role of virtue in relation to goods, thanks to the perpetuated memory of the first teaching of the gods through generations, the fathers' exhortation operates as a protreptic reminder of what they already know.

In their speech the fathers refer to a set of goods including πλοῦτος, κάλλος, ἰσχύς, and ἐπιστήμη, which they consider evil if bereft of justice and the rest of virtue.[50] Within the Platonic corpus we find similar lists of goods, considered from the same point of view as in the *Menexenus*. And, as far as the argument on goods is concerned, the parenetic speech of the fathers closely recalls the exhortations to virtue in Plato's dialogues.[51] In the *Meno*, Socrates, returning to Meno's hypothesis that virtue is wanting good things and having the power to acquire them, ἔστιν ἡ ἀρετὴ βούλεσθαί τε τἀγαθὰ καὶ δύνασθαι, and inferring that virtue is the faculty of acquiring good things, δύναμις τοῦ πορίζεσθαι τἀγαθά

49 See Long 2003: 49–69, who suggests that the other virtue "could well be the piety of which Aspasia spoke at the beginning of her speech when, in laying out the myth of autochthony, she praised the earth for producing in Attica superior beings, humans, who had both justice and religion (237d7)" (p. 63).

50 The whole passage echoes Socrates' arguments near the end of the *Apology* (30a7–b7), on whose much disputed interpretation see now Rowe 2007: 66–80. On the influence of the epitaph as a genre – and in particular of the *Menexenus* – on Socrates' 'Third Speech' in the *Apology*, see Strycker–Slings 1994: 235–239, who remarks that "at various points in the *Menexenus* one is reminded of Socrates' philosophical examinations as recounted in the *Apology*" (p. 237).

51 On the protreptic function of the list of goods in the *Euthydemus* (276b-281e) see Collins II 2015: 116–123.

(78b3–c5), makes a list of ἀγαθά, which includes health and wealth, ὑγίεια καὶ πλοῦτος, to which Meno adds gold, silver, and honour and rule in the city, χρυσίον καὶ ἀργύριον κτᾶσθαι καὶ τιμὰς ἐν πόλει καὶ ἀρχάς (78c5–7). Suggesting the insufficiency of Meno's point of view on goods, Socrates remarks that this getting, πόρος,[52] of goods must go along with justice or moderation or piety, or some other element of virtue, ἢ ἄλλο τι μόριον ἀρετῆς: if it does not, it won't be virtue, even though it provides good things (78d7–e1).[53]

The same point of view on goods in relation to virtue is put forward by the Athenian Stranger in Books 1 and 2 of the *Laws*. In the section of Book 1 dedicated to the goals of the proper legislator, after the criticism of a protreptic poem by Tyrtaeus (fr. 12 West), in which the poet wrongly praises courage in external war above all virtues, the Athenian Stranger lauds Cretan laws, for they accomplish happiness for those who observe them, providing the citizens with all goods (631b3–6). Goods, in his opinion, are of two kinds: human,[54] ὑγίεια, κάλλος ἰσχύς and πλοῦτος, and divine, which correspond to the so-called four cardinal virtues, φρόνησις, σωφροσύνη, δικαιοσύνη and ἀνδρεία (631b6–d1); the Athenian Stranger points out that human goods are dependent on the divine, thus the city which receives the greater acquires also the less, or else it is bereft of both – ἤρτηται δ' ἐκ τῶν θείων θάτερα, καὶ ἐὰν μὲν δέχηταί τις τὰ μείζονα πόλις, κτᾶται καὶ τὰ ἐλάττονα, εἰ δὲ μή, στέρεται ἀμφοῖν (631b6–c1). In Book 2, when discussing correct education, the Athenian Stranger recalls once again the Tyrtaeus poem on martial virtue he had quoted in Book 1, this time suggesting a free-standing and tendentious exegesis of the elegy. While in Tyrtaeus poem we read that a man gifted with remarkable qualities and goods does not deserve praise when lacking in courage, θοῦρις ἀλκή, when quoting the elegy he deliberately replaces the term ἀλκή with the term δικαιοσύνη, thus interpreting Tyrtaeus' martial excellence as justice, without which – he remarks – a man will not ever achieve any of the things that are generally said to be good (660e6–661a4). The Athenian Stranger then claims that the goods of which

52 For the interpretations of the term πόρος in this passage see Bluck 1961: 261, according to whom it is "used for πορίζεσθαι." Canto-Sperber 1993: 243 n. 87, notes that "c'est le même terme *póros* qui servait à Socrate, dans l'emprunt fait plus haut à la théorie d'Empédocle, pour désigner les pores des corps par lesquels passent les effluves."

53 On the relation of virtue with the acquisition of goods in this passage see Scott 2006: 53–56.

54 The ἀνθρώπινα ἀγαθά the Athenian Stranger refers to here correspond to the list of human goods Socrates provides in Book 6 of the *Republic* (491c1), which Socrates considers a potentially corrupting influence upon a soul of the best nature which has received a bad education (491d1–e5).

the many speak,[55] such as health, beauty, wealth, and countless other things (thought to be) 'goods', μυρία ἄλλα ἀγαθά, are not really goods (661a4–5). Numbering among μυρία ἄλλα ἀγαθά the senses, such as keen sight and hearing and acute perception of all the objects of sensation, and tyrannical power, he remarks that all these goods, and even life itself, are a very great evil, μέγιστον κακόν, for the man endowed with all the so-called goods but lacking in justice and all virtue (661b4–c5). Consistent with the criticism in Book 1 of Tyrtaeus' courage-oriented ethics which, lacking in δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, and φρόνησις cannot lead to complete virtue, σύμπασα ἀρετή (629d7–630d1), in Book 2 the Athenian Stranger argues for a comprehensive conception of virtue as a whole. On this conception, only a complete complement of virtues can turn supposed goods into real goods, and therefore make life worth living. The Athenian Stranger's line of reasoning on goods in relation to a virtuous way of life is akin to the argument of the fathers' exhortation to virtue in the *Menexenus*: his closing statement, that conventional goods are a great evil without justice and all other virtues, πλὴν δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἁπάσης, closely resembles the fathers' last sentence in the exhortation to children, according to which πᾶσά ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς πανουργία, οὐ σοφία φαίνεται: both passages share the same perspective on goods and virtuous life in relation to virtue.

Beside the ethical perspective on goods seen so far within the corpus, the protreptic purpose of the dead fathers' speech, as delivered just before approaching death, brings to mind the atmosphere of impending death which surrounds Socrates at the end of the *Gorgias*.[56] All through the dialogue, and especially during the conversation with Callicles, Socrates' death sentence resounds in every line, till the pinnacle of the myth of the afterlife at the end of the dialogue. Introduced as a validation of Socrates' claim that arriving in Hades with a soul stuffed with unjust actions is the worst of all bad things, since it is not death but what is unjust that one should be afraid of (522e1–6), Socrates is so persuaded by the truth of the account (526d3–4)[57] that he declares

55 The Athenian Stranger echoes an anonymous *skolion* (PMG 890), which Socrates quotes in the *Gorgias* (451d5–e5), just after Gorgias' definition of the object of rhetoric: τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀνθρωπείων πραγμάτων καὶ ἄριστα.

56 On the relationship between the *Menexenus* and the *Gorgia* see Dodds 1959: 23–25, Allen 1984: 322, Salkever 1993: 133–135 and 140–141, Monoson 1998: 491, Tsitsiridis 1998: 41–52, Kerch 2008: 94–114, Mahoney 2010: 38–57, and Pappas–Zelcer 2015: 216–218.

57 Socrates affirms that he considers the account of the afterlife true twice, once when he introduces the myth (ὡς ἀληθῆ γὰρ ὄντα σοι λέξω ἃ μέλλω λέγειν: 523a2–3) and a second time at the end (ταῦτ' ἔστιν, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ἃ ἐγὼ ἀκηκοὼς πιστεύω ἀληθῆ εἶναι: 524a8–b1). Irwin 1979: 242, maintains that by calling the *mythos* '*logos*' Socrates "means that (a) it

that he will try to be the best that it is in his power to be, in life and in death (526d3–e1), and that he will exhort all other human beings, including Callicles, to follow this way of life (526e1–4). In his final exhortation, Socrates urges Callicles to practice justice through words that closely recall those of the fathers' message in the *Menexenus* (527e1–7). In sharp contrast with Callicles' selective theory of excellence, as devoid of justice and temperance (491a7–b4), Socrates claims that the best way of life, ὁ τρόπος ἄριστος τοῦ βίου, is to practise justice and the rest of virtue, τὴν δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν ἀσκοῦντας, in life and in death, as the myth of the afterlife shows.[58] As stated above, the words with which Socrates urges Callicles to practice virtue closely recall the exhortation of the fathers in the prosopopoeia: both the Socrates of the *Gorgias* and the Socrates of the *Menexenus* speaking on behalf of the fathers share the same perspective on how one should behave in order to be virtuous. But whereas in the *Gorgias* Socrates' view on the best way of life derives from his inquiry on justice throughout the dialogue with the characters of Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles – covering the multi-faceted mask of rhetoric –,[59] in the *Menexenus* Plato portrays the best way of life achieved by the fallen fathers without dialectical inquiry. In the pseudo-historical yet ideal Athens depicted in the *Menexenus*, Plato portrays the Athenian citizens practicing and exhorting others to practice the way of life which coincides with Socrates' best way of life in the *Gorgias*. But whereas in the *Gorgias* Plato stages Socrates embracing an ethical way of life through dialectic, in the *Menexenus* he represents virtuous citizens, acting and speaking according to virtue.[60]

In rewriting Athenian history through a funeral speech, Plato depicts an ideal Athens that never really existed, its citizens displaying a virtuous conduct they achieve not by means of philosophy, but thanks to inborn virtue supported by the teachings of the gods, whose legacy they perpetuate through the examples of their *praxeis* and protreptic *logoi*. With their words the fathers exhort the children not to learn what virtue is and to behave according to it – as

is true … and (b) it is rationally defensable." For Socrates' tale about the afterlife as true *logos*, see discussion in Stauffer 2006: 167–176. According to Rowe 2012: 187–198, "built into the story he is about to tell there is a genuine *logos* which he regards as saying what is straightforwardly true, overlapping with but separable from other elements that are purely mythical" (p. 189).

58 For Socrates' examination of Callicles' view of justice in this section, see Stauffer 2006: 92–102.

59 For the political background of the *Gorgias* – between the 90's and 80's of the 4th century – see Yunis 1996: 117–119.

60 Namely, the only *mimesis* admitted in the *Republic* for the *paideia* of the citizens of Kallipolis, the *mimesis* the *metrios aner* is supposed to perform (3. 396c6–e1), and poets must perform in order to be welcome into the ideal city (10. 607a).

Socrates does in the untrained by the gods Athens of Plato's dialogues –, but to carry on practicing that inborn virtue upon which the gods based their teaching. Their ethical commitment is therefore to recall what they are supposed to know, εἰδότες, about any human goods, that is πλοῦτος, κάλλος, ἰσχύς as well as ἐπιστήμη – knowledge received from the gods that they developed and perpetuated over generations.

4 Virtue and Knowledge in the *Menexenus*

As stated above, in the fathers' speech ἐπιστήμη is the highest point of a *gradatio* which starts from external goods, πλοῦτος, κάλλος, and ἰσχύς, and ends with the internal good of knowledge: πᾶσά τε ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς πανουργία, οὐ σοφία φαίνεται (246e7–247a2). Just like wealth, beauty, and strength, even knowledge, if bereft of virtues, appears to be like a deceitful skill, πανουργία, not wisdom, σοφία. Here the term ἐπιστήμη is to be considered a *vox media*, whose value is positive only if virtue-oriented; if not, it proves to be a deceitful skill. How knowledge could be at the same time a deceitful skill and true wisdom is well explained by two passages from the corpus, one from the *Theaetetus* and one from the *Laws*, where Plato draws a distinction between πανουργία and σοφία which is akin to that of the fathers in the *Menexenus*.[61]

In the digression of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates distinguishes between a man's true capacity, ἡ ὡς ἀληθῶς δεινότης, which corresponds to wisdom, σοφία, and true virtue, ἀρετὴ ἀληθινή (being as just as possible – as god is), from all other δεινότητες and σοφίαι in politics and crafts, which look like σοφίαι, but are instead πανουργίαι for the one who possesses them (176c3–d5).[62] The opposition between σοφία and πανουργία in the *Laws* closely mirrors the same opposition in the *Menexenus*. At the end of Book 5, the Athenian Stranger, after asserting the great power among subjects of study of the arithmetic – which makes the one who is by nature sleepy and dull quick to learn –, remarks that all subjects of education, τὰ παιδεύματα, turn out to be a πανουργία instead of σοφία in an illiberal and money-loving soul (747b6–c3): just as the subjects of study, τὰ παιδεύματα, can produce πανουργία instead of σοφία in an illiberal

61 The term πανουργία appears also in the *Hippias Minor*, once in connection with φρόνησις as features of πολύτροποι and ἀπατεῶνες men (365e4), and one time in connection with σοφία, when Socrates urges Hippias to find any case in which one person is truthful and another (distinct, not the same) person is a liar in whatever sort of wisdom (σοφία) or villainy (πανουργία) he likes, or whatever he wants to call it (368e1–369a2).

62 On this section see Campbell 1883²: 128–129, Sedley 2004: 74–76, and Stern 2008: 176–182.

and money-loving soul, so the fathers in the *Menexenus* consider ἐπιστήμη a deceitful skill, πανουργία, not wisdom, σοφία, when not coupled with virtue. According to the Athenian Stranger's line of reasoning, whereby education leads to wisdom only in a virtue-oriented soul, in the *Menexenus* ἐπιστήμη refers to the body of knowledge Athenian citizens can resort to in leading private and political life, whose value and outcomes are positive only when oriented by virtue.

The fathers' reference to *episteme* raises two closely interwoven issues: the suggested, albeit not necessary, identity of knowledge with wisdom, and, more broadly, the problem of the nature of the knowledge attributed by Plato to Athenian citizens, especially when compared to philosopher-kings' knowledge in the *Republic*. The absence of philosophy within the city of the *Menexenus* also raises the problem of the nature of the relationship between the *arete* and *episteme* Plato attributes to his almost ideal citizens, by birth and gods respectively. As seen above, the Athenians' virtue is defined as an inborn disposition towards justice and the gods (237d), resulting from their being generated by a land which is dear to the gods. Defined as such, the status of *arete* in the city of the *Menexenus* cannot be identified with the nature of virtue in the ideal city of the *Republic*, where virtue depends on knowledge, namely the knowledge of the Good, which pertains only to philosophers as a highest outcome of their philosophical *paideia*. In view of the dependence of virtue on philosophical knowledge in the city of Kallipolis, in the *Menexenus* the dynamic between knowledge and virtue is overturned, for virtue is here necessary to knowledge for it to be wisdom.

The analysis carried out so far of the fathers' exhortation has indicated the prominent role of virtue over knowledge within the city of the *Menexenus*. The presence of *episteme* among the goods whose ethical value depends on virtue prevents it playing the role Socrates attributes to *episteme* at the end of the philosophers' *paideia* in the *Republic*, where knowledge of the Good, on the contrary, is the essential precondition for acquiring virtue, which the order within Kallipolis depends on. The presence of *episteme* among goods is to be interpreted in light of the extraordinary status of the *Menexenus*' Athenian citizens, who are, according to the mythical account on their exceptional birth, provided with an inborn virtue and endowed with a divine education. As we know from the fictional account of Athenians' extraordinary birth and education, neither citizens' virtue nor knowledge originates from philosophical inquiry but from the mother land and the gods respectively. Their knowledge is the outcome of the early teachings of the gods, from which any other achievement derives, including the constitution, for even the Athenian *politeia* is said to be the outcome of their birth and education (γεννηθέντες δὲ καὶ παιδευθέντες οὕτως οἱ τῶνδε πρόγονοι ᾤκουν πολιτείαν

κατασκευασάμενοι: 238b7).[63] Their virtue is not the result of philosophical education, as for the philosopher-kings of Kallipolis, but an inborn disposition they possess from birth. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that on the basis of its primary role as the cause of wisdom, σοφία, the function of virtue in the city praised in the *Menexenus* does not diverge from the function philosophical knowledge, ἐπιστήμη, has in the ideal city of the *Republic*.[64] But while in the ideal *sophe polis* of the *Republic* virtue is the outcome of a philosophical model of education, in the pseudo-historical *polis* of the *Menexenus* virtue is an innate habit passed down through the generations to the first earthborn Athenians, whom the mother earth Attica gave forth as *agathoi*. Depicting a city where citizens descend from a land dear to the gods (237c5–7), are born *agathoi* with an innate disposition toward justice and piety (237d7), and are educated by the gods, implies an ethics aiming not to achieve virtue by means of knowledge, as in the *Republic*, but to act according to the virtue one already possesses, so that knowledge can serve ethical aims. In the virtuous city without philosophers described in the *Menexenus*, the exhortation of the dead fathers must be therefore interpreted as an example of protreptic speech, urging the citizens to act according to their inborn virtuous natures. Far from being a mere rhetorical ornament within the epitaph's literary form, the fathers' exhortation to virtue fulfills a precise function in offsetting the effects of the degeneration of the cosmos to which even the Athens founded by the gods of the *Menexenus* is necessarily subjected. Because of the process of degeneration of the *politeiai* through history, the exhortation to practice virtue is necessary in order to hinder the continuous increase of *kakia* in the generated cosmos.[65]

How it could be possible to lose inborn virtue is shown by Plato through the account of the degeneration of Atlantis in the *Critias*. At the end of the description of the great and magnificent monarchy of Atlantis, Critias explains the reasons for its decadence by referring to a change in the Atlantis citizens' disposition toward virtue. As long as Poseidon's offspring disregarded everything but virtue and thought of their possessions as of no consequence (120e3–121a3), they didn't slip into decline, for they could see distinctly that

63 Löwenclau 1961: 68, sees here evidence of the fact that the Athens of the *Menexenus* coincides with the Athens described in the *Critias*, where Athena and Hephaestus inspire the Athenians to draft the constitution (109d1–2).

64 For a different opinion on the nature and function of virtue in the *Menexenus* see Petrucci 2017: 49–70, who interprets it as a virtue of lower degree: "in the *epitaphios* we are offered a glimpse of Plato's reflection on ethics from a lower point of view, that is, according to the virtue that is πολιτική and δημοτική" (p. 70). See also Trivigno 2009: 29–58.

65 On the analogy in Plato's dialogues between cosmos, city, and individual see Gaiser 1991^2: 133–154.

even their possessions increased by mutual friendship joined with virtue, and that when pursued and honored possessions are lost and virtue perishes with them as well. By this kind of reasoning, λογισμός, and as long as the divine nature lasted within them they thrived (121a5–8). But when the human portion of their nature began to predominate over divine portion they became incapable of bearing their vast wealth and lost the best of their valuable possessions, virtue (121a8–b4).[66] As commentators point out,[67] the correct *logismos* attributed to the autochthonous inhabitants of Atlantis before their degeneration closely resembles the argument on the central role of virtue in relation to goods in the dead fathers' speech in the *Menexenus*. The virtuous success of Athens over Atlantis shows that the degeneration of the cosmos, represented in the *Critias* by the fading divine element, can be counterbalanced by the constant practice of virtue, a practice which is fostered by protreptic speeches, such as the fathers' exhortation within the encomium of the virtuous Athens in the *Menexenus*' epitaph.

5 Conclusions

In describing virtuous cities and their just policies, Plato always makes virtue play a central role, whether virtue derives from philosophers' knowledge as in the *Republic*, or whether it is the outcome of the just *politeia* of Magnesia as in the *Laws*, or the result of an inborn disposition joined with the teaching of the gods as in the *Menexenus* and in the *Critias*. In a city without philosophers, yet molded by the gods, like the Athens depicted in the *Menexenus*, divine education plays the role played by the philosophical *paideia* in the *Republic*. It follows that the *episteme* the fathers talk about does not coincide with the philosopher's *episteme*, intended as ultimate achievement of dialectical *paideia* in the central books of the *Republic*, yet, though having a different cause, it produces the same outcomes when informed by virtue.

As we have seen, the exhortation to children displays themes which are central in Plato's ethics, such as the subordination of goods to virtue and the relationship between true and false *episteme*. The ethical issues Plato addresses in the *Menexenus* are examined in other dialogues in wider and more problematic contexts, yet in the former the relationship between *arete* and

66 For the metaphysical implications of the opposition between human and divine element in the historical account of the *Timaeus–Critias* as well as in the *Menexenus* see Gaiser 1991^2: 158–159, 113–116, and 174–179.

67 See Nesselrath 2006: 435.

episteme is overturned when compared to its Socratic and dialectical treatment in early and middle dialogues, for Plato represents in the *Menexenus* an ideal Athens whose autochthonous citizens ground their knowledge not on philosophical inquiry but on the first teaching of gods and their inborn virtue. The literary genre of the epitaph does not reproduce the Socratic dialogue and it is not supposed to: the political and ethical issues the *Menexenus* raises are put forth in a non-problematic way, due to the protreptic aim of the funeral speech.

As I have suggested, the most fitting parallel for the *Menexenus*' almost entirely invented Athens is to be found in the *Atlantikos logos* narrated in the *Critias*. In both dialogues Plato depicts the city that sentenced Socrates to death as it would have been under the guidance of the gods, thus making his main character – and all of us – listeners to philosophical *logoi* on a virtuous city, where philosophy corresponds not to seeking knowledge in order to orient human virtues toward the good, but to ἀσκεῖν μετ' ἀρετῆς, that is to preserve the divine, original *sophia* through virtue. With the *logoi* of Timaeus and Critias and with the *logos epitaphios* of Aspasia, Plato shows a feature both attributed to the philosopher in the digression of the *Theaetetus* and to the poets admitted into the ideal city of the *Republic*: Plato, quoting the words of Socrates to Theodorus, knows how to throw his cloak over his shoulder as a freeman should, and to acquire the true harmony of speech, and hymn aright the praises of the true life of gods and blessed men (175e6–176a1).[68]

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68 On this passage of the *Theaetetus* with regard to Plato's claim to poetic excellence see Capra 2010: 206–209.

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CHAPTER 6

Der beste Logos als Handlungskriterium in Platons *Kriton*

Sabrina Mertler

Abstract

The research on Plato's dialogue *Crito*, in which *Crito* wants to convince Socrates to flee, focuses primarily on the question of compliance with laws and is therefore often included in Plato's political philosophy. In the following, however, the thesis is to be presented that the primary theme represents Socrates loyalty to his principles in extreme situations and just actions associated with it that leads to bliss. For this reason, the *Crito* is rather an ethical dialogue, which, significantly enough, has already been subtitled "On what needs to be done" in ancient times. Socrates' inclusion of the fictional personalized laws of Athens serves rather to illustrate his actions according to the best logos than his obedience to the laws.

In Platons kurzem, aber äußerst komplexem Frühdialog *Kriton* geht es für Sokrates[1] buchstäblich um Leben und Tod:[2] Sokrates sitzt nach seiner Verurteilung im Staatsgefängnis von Athen und wartet auf die Rückkehr des Schiffes aus Delos, als er von Kriton besucht wird. Emotional durch den baldigen Verlust seines Freundes und Vorbilds aufgebracht, verwickelt Kriton Sokrates in ein Dilemma: Er möchte ihn zur Flucht überreden. Wie reagiert Sokrates? Soll er sich auf Kritons Vorschlag einlassen und gegen den Urteilsspruch der Richter aus dem Staatsgefängnis fliehen oder mit dem dortigen Verbleib seinem sicheren Tod ins Auge sehen? Eine Flucht wäre leicht umsetzbar, Kriton hat bereits alle Vorbereitungen getroffen (*Crit.* 44e–45c).[3] Mit dem Gesetz auf der einen Seite und Sokrates' Überzeugung und lang erprobter Lebensweise[4] auf

1 Wenn im Folgenden die Rede von ‚Sokrates' ist, meine ich damit stets die literarische Figur, nicht die historische Person.

2 Die Entstehung dieses Aufsatzes verdanke ich maßgeblich Herrn Prof. Dr. Christoph Helmig, dem ich an dieser Stelle herzlich für die anregenden und fruchtbaren Gespräche danken möchte.

3 Alle deutschen Übersetzungen sind übernommen von Schleiermacher 2009.

4 Man vergleiche beispielweise die entsprechenden Passagen aus der *Apologie* (31d, 38 a).

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der anderen Seite wird im *Kriton* das Spannungsfeld zwischen Individuum und Staat, bzw. zwischen Sokrates' Individualethik und der politischen Ethik der personifizierten Gesetze Athens, thematisiert.

Wie Sokrates' Entscheidung ausgefallen ist, ist gemeinhin bekannt. Eine große Frage bleibt dennoch bis heute bestehen: Warum ist Sokrates nicht geflohen, obwohl er augenscheinlich die Möglichkeit dazu hatte? Das Aufzeigen zweier Antwortmöglichkeiten ist das Ziel dieses Aufsatzes.

„Über das, was zu tun ist" lautet der dem *Kriton* zwar nicht von Platon, jedoch bereits in der Antike verliehene Untertitel des Dialogs und weist ihn damit nicht nur als ethischen Dialog[5] aus, sondern gibt auch einen ersten Hinweis auf das Thema des Dialogs: die Frage nach dem angemessenen Handeln. Das entscheidende Kriterium hierfür ist, wie sich zeigen wird, die Gerechtigkeit. Daher gilt es, die im *Kriton* vertretene Gerechtigkeitskonzeption eingehender zu betrachten, um sich der Frage zu nähern, warum Sokrates nicht geflohen ist. Dabei ergibt sich folgendes Problem: Im Dialog sind gleich mehrere Gerechtigkeitsmodelle vertreten.

Im *Kriton* werden dem Leser drei aufeinanderfolgende Monologe präsentiert, die eine jeweils in sich geschlossene thematische Einheit darstellen und meine Analyse leiten werden: In dem ersten Abschnitt erläutert Kriton seine Argumente, die für eine dringliche Flucht des Sokrates aus dem Gefängnis sprechen (*Crit*. 44b–46a). Als Replik erinnert Sokrates Kriton unter Einbezug eines *Technê*-Beispiels an seine grundsätzlichen Handlungsprinzipien, die auch in der gegenwärtigen Situation ihre Gültigkeit nicht verlieren (*Crit*. 46b–50a). Der letzte der drei Monologe entstammt dem Munde der personifizierten Gesetze Athens, die Sokrates ihrerseits auf die Rechtswidrigkeit und Ungerechtigkeit einer möglichen Flucht hinweisen (*Crit*. 50a–54e).

1 Kritons Argumente für eine Flucht des Sokrates

Kriton ist ein wohlhabender Mann und langjähriger Freund des Sokrates. Nach Erler ist er „an Philosophie interessiert und will auch seine Söhne in dieser Wissenschaft ausbilden lassen."[6] Er tritt auch in anderen Dialogen Platons als Gesprächsteilnehmer auf, wie beispielsweise im *Euthydemos* und im *Phaidon*, und nahm mit seinem Sohn Kritoboulus am Prozess des Sokrates teil.[7] Dass

5 So auch Erler 2007: 116.
6 Erler 2007: 117.
7 Vgl. ebd.

Kriton selbst philosophische Schriften verfasste, gilt als unwahrscheinlich.[8] Bezüglich eines möglichen Verbleibs des Sokrates im Gefängnis behauptet Kriton zunächst, dass er in diesem Fall nicht nur einen wichtigen Freund verlöre, sondern sich zudem einen schlechten Ruf erwerbe, da er offensichtlich das Geld höher schätze als das Leben seines Freundes (*Crit.* 44b–c). Es folgt eine Ausräumung möglicher Zweifel: Sokrates müsse sich keine Sorgen machen, da Kriton genug Geld hätte, um Sokrates' Flucht zu organisieren. Zudem sei bereits alles für ihn vorbereitet (*Crit.* 44e–45c). Als zweiter Schritt wird zum ersten Mal das, wie sich zeigen wird, entscheidende Kriterium für eine Flucht angesprochen: die Gerechtigkeit. Interessanterweise zuerst von Kriton:[9] Seiner Meinung nach sei Sokrates' Tod nicht gerecht, da er schließlich seinen Feinden entgegenkomme und ihnen mit der Akzeptanz seiner Strafe Recht gebe (*Crit.* 45c), zumal nach Kriton der Prozess an sich ungerecht war. Daraufhin argumentiert Kriton in eine ganz andere Richtung weiter: Wer solle sich nach dessen Tod um Sokrates' Kinder sorgen? Kriton wirft Sokrates vor, die bequemste Handlungsoption für sich zu wählen und seinen eigenen Prinzipien, nämlich sich der Tugend zu befleißigen, untreu zu werden (*Crit.* 45d–e). Letztlich behauptet Kriton, sich für Sokrates und seine Freunde zu schämen, da es den Anschein habe, dass sie nur aus Feigheit und Unmännlichkeit in eine derartige Situation geraten seien. Kriton beschließt seine Rede mit der Aufforderung an Sokrates, nicht lange nachzudenken und ihm möglichst rasch zu folgen (*Crit.* 46a).

Die Auswahl und Anordnung der Argumente Kritons tragen zu dem Eindruck bei, dass dieser seine Gedanken eher emotional-assoziativ als logisch-rational äußert (vgl. *Crit.* 45c). Zu Beginn seines Überzeugungsversuchs begründet er seine Argumente noch, indem er beispielsweise darauf hinweist, dass letztlich die Menge für die derzeitige Situation des Sokrates verantwortlich sei und er daher auf seinen Ruf und auf die Meinung der Vielen (οἱ πολλοὶ) achten müsse (*Crit.* 44d). Warum es Kriton und Sokrates' anderen Freunden jedoch gebühre, sich für Sokrates in Gefahr zu bringen, erläutert Kriton nicht weiter. Stattdessen kulminieren Kritons Argumente in Polemik (*Crit.* 45e) und der drängenden Aufforderung, ihm zu folgen, ohne seine Rede zuvor geprüft zu haben.

8 Vgl. Nails 2002: 116.

9 „Ferner, Sokrates, dünkt mich auch nicht einmal recht zu sein, daß du darauf beharrst, dich selbst preiszugeben, da du dich retten kannst, und selbst betreibst, daß es so mit dir werde, wie nur deine Feinde es betreiben könnten und betrieben haben, welche dich verderben wollen" (*Crit.* 45c).

Kritons Überzeugungsversuch verrät einiges über seine Person: Inhaltlich deckt er in seiner Argumentation alle Bereiche der gängigen Moralvorstellungen ‚der Vielen' ab: Tugendhaftes Handeln impliziert für ihn, sich um seine Kinder zu sorgen, seine Ehre und seinen Ruf zu bewahren, seine Freunde zu retten und sich gegen die Feinde zur Wehr zu setzen. So schreibt auch Roslyn Weiss in *Socrates dissatisfied*:

> For Crito, justice involves having no hand in the ruination of oneself, one's friends or one's family; injustice involves being responsible in whole or in part for bringing upon oneself, one's friends, or one's family a state of adversity, as well as for furthering the malevolent ends of one's enemies.[10]

Auf Basis der Moralvorstellung des Kriton würde Sokrates demnach ungerecht handeln, sollte er nicht fliehen.

Als kurzes Fazit lässt sich resümieren, dass der Leser geneigt ist, Kriton, der als langjähriger Freund des Sokrates mit dessen Handlungsweisen und Prinzipien vertraut sein müsste, als oberflächlich zu verurteilen; als eine Person, die an materiellen Gütern interessiert ist. Aber wird Kriton vielleicht verfrüht verurteilt? Gestaltet sich die Frage nach einer Flucht nicht als komplexer?

2 Sokrates' Erwiderung auf Kritons Fluchtvorschlag

Sokrates bedankt sich zunächst für Kritons Anteilnahme, ermahnt ihn jedoch, dass seine Sorge um ihn mit dem Richtigen bestehen, d. h. richtig motiviert sein müsse (*Crit.* 46b).[11] Anschließend erinnert Sokrates Kriton daran, dass sich Sokrates zur Orientierung bei Handlungsentscheidungen stets nach dem besten Logos richtet: „ὡς ἐγὼ, οὐ μόνον νῦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀεί, τοιοῦτος οἷος τῶν ἐμῶν μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ πείθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὃς ἄν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος φαίνηται."[12] (*Crit.* 46b). Aber was bedeutet dieser Satz genau?

10 Weiss 1998: 49.

11 „ὦ φίλε Κρίτων, ἡ προθυμία σου πολλοῦ ἀξία εἰ μετά τινος ὀρθότητος εἴη: εἰ δὲ μή, ὅσῳ μείζων τοσούτῳ χαλεπωτέρα. σκοπεῖσθαι οὖν χρὴ ἡμᾶς εἴτε ταῦτα πρακτέον εἴτε μή": (*Crit.* 46b). „Deine Sorge um mich, du lieber Kriton, ist viel wert, wenn sie nur irgend mit dem Richtigen bestehen könnte; wo aber nicht, so ist sie, je dringender, desto peinlicher. Wir müssen also erwägen, ob dies wirklich tunlich ist oder nicht." Übersetzt von Friedrich Schleiermacher.

12 „Denn nicht jetzt nur, sondern schon immer habe ich ja das an mir, daß ich nichts anderem von mir gehorche als dem Satze, der sich mir bei der Untersuchung als der beste zeigt." Übersetzt von Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Er wurde in der Forschung auf unterschiedliche Weise ins Deutsche übertragen: So übersetzt beispielsweise Friedrich Schleiermacher ihn wie folgt: „Denn nicht jetzt nur, sondern schon immer habe ich ja das an mir, daß ich nichts anderem gehorche als dem Satze, der sich mir bei der Untersuchung als der beste erweist."[13] Während Otto Apelt schreibt: „Denn nicht erst jetzt, sondern immer schon habe ich es so gehalten, daß ich keiner anderen Stimme meines Innern folge als der, die mir bei eingehender Erwägung als die beste erscheint."[14] In der noch unveröffentlichten Übersetzung von Wolfgang Bernard lautet der Satz hingegen: „Wie ich nicht erst jetzt, sondern schon immer so bin, dass ich nichts anderem von dem in mir folge als dem Argument, welches immer mir, wenn ich nachdenke, das beste scheint."[15]

Auffallend ist, dass das Wort *Logos* (ὁ λόγος, im Original im Dativ Singular) in allen genannten Übersetzungen stets unterschiedlich ins Deutsche übertragen wird. Dies mag eine Folge des immensen Bedeutungsspektrums dieses Ausdrucks sein, weshalb ich im Folgenden den Originalterminus (*Logos*) beibehalte. Was bedeutet der Satz nun in der Praxis?

Zunächst bedeutet er, dass Sokrates keine impulsiven Entscheidungen fällt. Er lässt sich nicht von seinen Gefühlen leiten, sondern überprüft eingehend seine Situation und wägt die Konsequenzen seines Handelns ab. Der beste Logos impliziert zwei wesentliche Aspekte: Zum einen besteht die dauerhafte Aufforderung zur Prüfung, Infragestellung und Reflexion seiner Gedanken und seines Handelns. Zum anderen resultiert daraus eine Orientierung am besten Prüfungsergebnis. Sokrates macht sein Handeln von einem bestimmten Wissen abhängig.[16] Dieses Wissen, der beste Logos, ist der Maßstab für korrektes, gerechtes Handeln. Wie kommt man nun an dieses Wissen?

Der *Kriton* liefert keine direkte Antwort auf diese Frage. Es scheint sich dabei jedoch um eine Form des Prüfens von Aussagen zu handeln, da Sokrates Kriton den Vorschlag unterbreitet, „jene [früheren] Reden"(*Crit.* 46b) auf ihre Gültigkeit in der jetzigen Situation hin zu überprüfen. Allgemein lassen sich bei Platon verschiedene Formen der Prüfung nennen, von denen hier zwei näher erläutert werden: Die erste Möglichkeit besteht mit Rückgriff auf den *Theaitetos* im Gespräch der Seele mit sich selbst: Das Denken sei

13 Schleiermacher 2009: 51.
14 Apelt 1993: 88.
15 Bernhard o. J.
16 Vgl. nichtveröffentlichtes Manuskript von Marcel van Ackeren, das er mir freundlicherweise zur Verfügung gestellt hat, vgl. Van Ackeren o. J.

> eine Rede, welche die Seele bei sich selbst durchgeht über dasjenige was sie erforschen will. […] Denn so schwebt sie mir vor, dass, solange sie denkt, sie nichts anderes tut als sich unterreden, indem sie sich selbst antwortet (fragt und antwortet), bejaht und verneint (*Tht.* 189e).

Die Seele steht demnach im Dialog mit sich selbst. Die zweite Möglichkeit besteht im Gespräch mit anderen. Im Dialog kann Wissen sowohl gefunden als auch geprüft werden, was beispielsweise im *Menon* anschaulich bewiesen wird (*Men.* 82c–86c). Auch im *Kriton* fällt die Wahl auf die letztgenannte Möglichkeit. Gemeinsam, und das wird an mehreren Stellen betont, wird geprüft, ob eine Flucht gerecht wäre oder nicht. Dementsprechend zeigt sich Sokrates Kriton gegenüber einer entsprechenden Untersuchung seiner bisherigen Aussagen offen. Kriton darf mit ihm sachlich argumentieren, versuchen, den besten Logos in dieser Situation zu finden und Einwände und Korrekturvorschläge äußern, sich jedoch nicht auf seine bisher geäußerten Argumente berufen (*Crit.* 48e). Ein erster Schritt besteht nun darin, dass Sokrates Kriton die grundsätzliche Bedingung einer Erörterung der Frage nach einer Flucht nennt, indem er erklärt, dass die alten Reden, die jedoch nicht direkt wiedergegeben werden, auch jetzt noch ihre Gültigkeit besitzen. Nur wenn sie bessere Argumente finden, wird sich Sokrates auf Kritons Fluchtvorschlag einlassen und fliehen, ansonsten verbleibt Sokrates im Gefängnis.[17]

In einem zweiten Schritt reagiert Sokrates auf die vermeintliche Wichtigkeit der Meinung der Menge mit der Einführung eines *Technê*-Beispiels.[18] Der beste Logos gestalte sich demnach wie das Wissen eines Sachverständigen, beispielsweise wie das eines Arztes oder Turnmeisters. Für den Leistungssportler, der mit seinem Körper seinen Lebensunterhalt bestreitet, ist nur die Meinung des Arztes und Turnmeisters relevant, die er achten und fürchten muss, wenn es um die Belange seines Körpers geht. Sollte der Sportler dies jedoch versäumen und stattdessen den Rat der unkundigen Menge präferieren, „wird ihm Übles

17 „Das aber, was ich schon ehedem in meinen Reden festgesetzt habe, kann ich ja nun nicht verwerfen, weil mir dieses Schicksal geworden ist; sondern jene Reden erscheinen mir noch ganz dieselben, und ich schätze und ehre sie noch ebenso wie vorher. Wenn wir also nicht bessere als sie jetzt vorzutragen haben, so wisse nur, daß ich dir nicht nachgeben werde“ (*Crit.* 46 b-c).

18 Der Begriff „τέχνη“ findet sich bereits bei Homer und nimmt schon dort die Bedeutung von „Wissen“ an. Auch bei Platon referiert der Ausdruck nicht nur auf die „Technik,“ „Kunst“ oder „Fertigkeit,“ sondern kann alle „hierarchisch gedachten Wissensbestände“ bezeichnen (Ackeren 2009: 335). Weitere Informationen zu Platons *Technê*-Begriff finden sich in Balansard 2001.

(κακόν) begegnen"(*Crit.* 47c). Dieses Übel bezieht sich dann auf das, was für den Sportler am wichtigsten ist: seinen Körper.

Beachtenswert hierbei ist, dass die Meinung des Arztes nicht aufgrund seiner Autorität geachtet werden soll, sondern weil er über den besten Logos verfügt,[19] der sich in dem Wissen, was für den Erhalt des menschlichen Körpers notwendig ist, manifestiert.

Sokrates macht sein Tätigsein also von einer rationalen Entscheidung abhängig, d. h. von einer vorausgehenden Untersuchung und deren bestem Resultat. Daraus wird noch einmal deutlich, dass das Wissen über den besten Logos die Handlungsvoraussetzung darstellt. Denn nur wer über das entsprechende Wissen, d. h. den besten Logos in einer bestimmten Situation verfügt, ist in der Lage, entsprechend zu Handeln. Wissen und Handeln sind demnach unzertrennlich miteinander verbunden. Erneut stellt sich die Frage, wie man dieses handlungsentscheidende Wissen erhält. Als nächsten Schritt erweitert Sokrates das *Technê*-Beispiel um „alles andere" (*Crit.* 47c). Infolgedessen ist die Meinung des Sachverständigen auch hinsichtlich des Gerechten und Ungerechten, Schändlichen und Schönen, Guten und Bösen entscheidend (*Crit.* 47c–d). Folgerichtig bezieht Sokrates dieses Prinzip anschließend auf die konkrete Sachlage, d. h. auf die Frage, ob er fliehen sollte oder nicht. Sollten sie in diesem spezifischen Fall nicht auf die kundige Meinung eines Fachmanns hören, d. h. auf die Person, die sich „auf Gerechtes und Ungerechtes und die Wahrheit selbst versteht," dann würden sie genau das zerstören, das „durch Recht besser wird, durch Unrecht aber untergeht"(*Crit.* 47d).

Dass es sich hierbei um die Seele handelt, scheint eindeutig, doch wird diese im *Kriton* an keiner Stelle explizit erwähnt. Als Veranschaulichung sei an dieser Stelle auf den *Gorgias* verwiesen, in dem eine Seele-Körper-Analogie explizit eröffnet wird: Wie die Schlechtigkeit des Körpers in der Schwäche, Krankheit und Hässlichkeit liege, so liege die Schlechtigkeit der Seele in der Ungerechtigkeit, des Unverstandes und der Feigheit (*Gorg.* 477b).[20] Auch im *Gorgias* stellt die Ungerechtigkeit das größte Übel für die Seele dar, weil es in ihrer Macht liegt, der Seele am stärksten zu schaden (*Gorg.* 477e: ἡ ἀδικία ἄρα καὶ ἡ ἀκολασία καὶ ἡ ἄλλη ψυχῆς πονηρία μέγιστον τῶν ὄντων κακόν ἐστιν[21]). Daraus ergibt sich, dass beim Handeln stets auf die entsprechenden Folgen für

19 So auch Ackeren o. J.: 6.

20 Die Vormachtstellung der Seele im Vergleich zum Körper findet sich ebenfalls im *Gorgias*: „Wieviel unseliger noch als ein ungesunder Leib das ist, keine gesunde Seele zu haben, sondern eine faulige, ungerechte und unheilige" (*Gorg.* 479b).

21 „Die Ungerechtigkeit also und die Ungebundenheit und was sonst noch zur Schlechtigkeit der Seele gehört, ist das größte unter allen Übeln?" Übersetzt von Friedrich Schleiermacher.

die Seele geachtet werden muss. Dass die Unversehrtheit der Seele das höchste menschliche Gut ist, erklärt auch, warum Unrechterleiden nicht so schädlich ist wie Unrechtbegehen.[22]

Im *Kriton* lässt sich ebenfalls eine (indirekte) Körpergesundheit-Seelengesundheit-Analogie finden, denn auch im Bezug auf ethische Kernbegriffe wie das Schöne, Gerechte und Gute, gibt es nach Sokrates einen Fachmann, der sich „auf Gerechtes und Ungerechtes versteht und auf die Wahrheit (ἀλήθεια) selbst"(*Crit*. 48a): Ebenso wie die vom Fachmann, etwa vom Arzt und Turnmeister, empfohlenen Leibesübungen dem Erhalt des Körpers dienen, so diente, im Falle der erweiterten Analogie, das vom Experten des Gerechten und der Wahrheit empfohlene tugendhafte Verhalten der Gesundheit der Seele. Und ebenso wie bei einem Verstoß gegen den Rat des Arztes der Körper zerrüttet würde, so erlitte die Seele bei ungerechtem Verhalten Schaden. Da sich keiner freiwillig selbst Schaden zufügt, ist es ratsam, gerecht zu handeln. Im Falle einer Körpergesundheit-Seelengesundheit-Analogie wären demnach drei korrelierende Instanzen erkennbar: Der Körper entspräche der Seele, die Leibesübungen dem gerechten Handeln und der Turnmeister schließlich dem Fachmann des gerechten Handelns. Wer sich jedoch genau hinter dem Fachmann für das Gerechte verbirgt, gibt Platon im *Kriton* nicht preis. Die These, dass sich Sokrates selbst als Experte für die Gerechtigkeit verstehe, erscheint eher unwahrscheinlich. Eine derartige Selbsteinschätzung widerspräche dem bisherigen charakterlichen Bild des Sokrates. Nach Kahn behauptet Sokrates an keiner Stelle im *Kriton* über ein derartiges Wissen zu verfügen. Sokrates verbrachte jedoch sein ganzes Leben in Selbstreflexion und Seelsorge, sodass falls „the Crito does not represent Socrates as an expert (epistémon) in matters of right and wrong, it certainly presents him as referring in positive terms to the possibility of such knowledge."[23] Was jedoch aus dem *Technê*-Beispiel extrahiert werden kann, ist die Konsequenz der Nicht-Befolgung des Ratschlags des Fachmannes für das Gerechte: Man handelt ungerecht und läuft Gefahr, seiner Seele Schaden zuzufügen, was bei Sokrates durch die Umsetzung einer ungerechten Flucht der Fall wäre.

Zusammenfassend veranschaulicht Sokrates mit seiner Erinnerung an die bisherigen Grundsätze Kriton nicht nur die Unwichtigkeit der Meinung der Vielen, sondern er betont zugleich die Notwendigkeit der Sorge um die Seele durch gerechtes Handeln. Wird der Rat des ‚Sachverständigen'bezüglich tugendhaftem Verhalten nicht befolgt, fügen wir der Seele Schaden zu. Die Seele

22 „[…] das war also wahr, dass nämlich das Unrechttun um wie viel schändlicher, um so viel auch übler wäre, als das Unrechtleiden" (*Gorg*. 508 b-c).

23 Kahn 1996: 103.

ist jedoch höher als der Körper zu schätzen, da es sich mit einem zerrütteten Körper zu leben lohne, nicht jedoch mit einer zerrütteten Seele (*Crit.* 48a). Dies mag bereits als erste Vordeutung auf den Entschluss des Sokrates, im Gefängnis zu verweilen, zu lesen sein, da dieser durch eine Flucht seinen Körper zwar retten könnte, durch ein mögliches ungerechtes Verhalten, das mit einer Flucht einherginge, jedoch der höher anzusiedelnden Seele Schaden zufügte. Im Anschluss an jenen Grundsatz, dass nur der beste Logos zählt, weil er das Wissen des Fachmannes repräsentiert, wird ein weiterer Satz von Sokrates im *Kriton* einer Prüfung unterzogen: „Dass man nämlich nicht das Leben am höchsten achten muss, sondern das gut leben.“(*Crit.* 48b). Zur Vermeidung von Missverständnissen, worum es sich bei dem „Gut-Leben“ handelt, präzisiert Sokrates sogleich, dass gut zu leben damit korrespondiere, auf gerechte und sittliche Weise zu leben. Die Verbindung der beiden Grundsätze (1. Orientierung am besten Logos und 2. der Wert des „gut Lebens“) besteht darin, dass das eine die Voraussetzung für das andere darstellt. Der beste Logos besteht in dem Wissen um das Gerechte, an dem man seine Handlungen orientieren muss, während das Gut-Leben wiederum als Anwendung des besten Logos fungiert, weshalb Sokrates auch diese Reihenfolge bei der Besprechung wählte.[24] Darauffolgend wird auch der Satz, dass Unrechterleiden nicht so schändlich ist, wie selbst Unrecht zu begehen, im *Kriton* angewandt, nämlich wenn Sokrates den Tod dem Unrechthandeln vorzieht:

> Und wenn sich zeigt, wir können dies [die Flucht] nur ungerechterweise ausführen, daß wir dann nur nicht jenes, ob wir sterben müssen, wenn ich hier bleibe und mich ruhig verhalte, oder was sonst erleiden, gar nicht in Anschlag bringen dürfen gegen das Unrechthandeln. (*Crit.* 48d)

Nachdem sich Sokrates der Gültigkeit der bisherigen Handlungskriterien durch die mehrfache Bestätigung von Seiten Kritons vergewissert hat, beginnt die eigentliche Argumentation durch eine erneute Nennung der alten Prinzipien als deren Grundlage (*Crit.* 49b): Erstens darf man auf keine Weise Unrecht tun (*Crit.* 49a). Zweitens darf man auch dann nicht unrecht handeln, wenn einem selbst Unrecht widerfahren ist (*Crit.* 49b). Drittens unterscheidet sich Schlecht- Behandeln nicht vom Unrechttun (*Crit.* 49c). Nach der vierten

24 Das Kriterium der Gerechtigkeit als entscheidende Instanz wird durch die gehäufte Nennung und Sokrates’ explizite Anmerkung deutlich: „Also von dem Eingestandenen aus müssen wir dieses erwägen, ob es gerecht ist, daß ich versuche, von hier fortzugehen, ohne daß die Athener mich fortlassen, oder nicht gerecht“ (*Crit.* 48b-c). Für die Untersuchung dieser Frage erweisen sich Kritons Argumente als unbrauchbar, da er wie einer der Vielen argumentiert, d. h. „ohne Vernunft“ (48c: οὐδενὶ ξὺν νῷ).

Prämisse schließlich muss man sich an eine einmal getroffene Übereinkunft mit jemandem, über das, was gerecht ist, auch stets halten (*Crit.* 49e).

Bei der Prüfung, also der aktualen Umsetzung der Orientierung am besten *Logos*, beruft sich Sokrates im *Kriton* auf diese Prämissen, die auch jetzt, d. h. in Extremsituationen, Bestand haben. Sie sind demnach nicht von äußerlichen Faktoren abhängig. Fuhrmann bezeichnet sie als „Identität seines [des Sokrates] Denkens und der für sein Handeln maßgeblichen Kriterien als letzter, unableitbarer Instanz."[25] Gary Young hingegen bemängelt in seinem Aufsatz *Socrates and obedience*, dass die Prämissen als Ausgangspunkt für die Untersuchung zwei Schwachstellen aufwiesen: Zum einen setze Sokrates sie ohne jede Begründung voraus. Zum anderen dienten sie nicht der Beantwortung der Frage, ob eine Flucht gerecht wäre, weil sie nichts darüber aussagen, was eigentlich gerecht sei.[26]

Bezüglich des ersten Problems ist anzumerken, dass Sokrates seine erste Prämisse, dass man nie ungerecht handeln darf, zuvor eingehend durch das Aufzeigen der Konsequenzen der Nichtbeachtung deutlich gemacht hat. Wer unrecht handelt, schadet dadurch seiner Seele. Die Seelsorge war jedoch Teil des göttlichen Auftrags, auf den Sokrates in der *Apologie* verweist (*Apol.* 28e). Die fehlende Begründung der zweiten und dritten Prämisse könnte dem Umstand geschuldet sein, dass es sich hierbei um Fallbeispiele handelt, die einen Verstoß gegen die erste Prämisse implizieren. Dass Sokrates betont, dass man auch dann nicht unrecht handeln darf, wenn einem selbst Unrecht widerfahren ist, kann als Anspielung auf Kritons Argument gelesen werden, dass der Prozess des Sokrates ungerecht war. Prämisse vier hingegen ist komplexer. Erneut steht die Gerechtigkeit im Fokus: An gerechte Verträge muss man sich halten. An dieser Stelle ist Young zuzustimmen, da die Bedingungen eines gerechten Vertragsabschlusses erst an späterer Stelle von den personifizierten Gesetzen angesprochen werden (*Crit.* 52e). Bezüglich des zweiten Problems, das Gary Young nennt, bietet der *Kriton* tatsächlich keine Lösung an: Das Kriterium zur Untersuchung der Frage nach der Flucht besteht zwar in der Gerechtigkeit einer möglichen Flucht, worum es sich dabei jedoch explizit handelt, wird erst in der *Politeia* konkretisiert. Dort beschreibt Sokrates die Gerechtigkeit näher als dasjenige, „was sowohl um seiner selbst willen wie wegen der daraus entspringenden Folgen von jedem geliebt werden muss, der glücklich werden will" (*Resp.* 358a).

Es überrascht nicht, dass Kriton Sokrates zunächst nicht folgen kann, obwohl dieser bei der Prüfung seiner früheren Aussagen in einem deduktiven

25 Fuhrmann 1987: 91.
26 Vgl. Young 1974: 10f.

Verfahren sehr systematisch vorgegangen ist: Zunächst betont er die allgemeine Notwendigkeit einer Prüfung des Gesagten, wobei er noch keine spezifischen Kriterien nennt (*Crit.* 46b). Anschließend gibt er Kriton einen allgemeinen Leitfaden für Handlungen an die Hand, an dem er sich selbst zeitlebens orientierte: den besten Logos. Auch diesen bezieht Sokrates zunächst nicht auf den Einzelfall, sondern möchte ihn als grundsätzliche Orientierungshilfe verstanden wissen. Es erfolgt eine Anknüpfung an bereits vorhandenes Wissen, wenn Sokrates auf die auch in dieser Situation noch bestehende Gültigkeit der früher erörterten Logoi verweist (*Crit.* 46c). Um Kriton die Wichtigkeit der Orientierung am besten Logos anhand des auch in anderen Untersuchungen erörterten Satzes, dass einige Meinungen zwar zu achten, andere aber zu vernachlässigen seien (*Crit.* 46d), zu veranschaulichen, führt Sokrates im Folgenden das *Technê*-Beispiel ein.[27] Schließlich bezieht Sokrates dieses Prinzip, d. h. die Orientierung am besten Logos, auf die konkrete Sachlage (*Crit.* 47c: „worüber wir jetzt beratschlagen"), d. h. auf die Frage, ob Sokrates fliehen sollte oder nicht.[28] Als Folge auf Kritons Aporie führt Sokrates die von ihm personifizierten Gesetze Athens ein.

3 Die Einführung der „Gesetze"[29]

Ebenso wie die Anzahl und die Gewichtung der Argumente Kritons *für* eine Flucht in der Forschung umstritten sind, herrscht auch Uneinigkeit bezüglich der Anzahl der von den Gesetzen vorgebrachten Argumente *gegen* eine Flucht. Im Folgenden werde ich vier Argumente der personifizierten Gesetze grob skizzieren. Das erste Argument der Gesetze gegen eine Flucht des Sokrates, das ‚Rechtssicherheitsargument', lässt sich wie folgt zusammenfassen: Die Stadt

27 Das *Technê*-Beispiel erfüllt zwei Funktionen: Erstens widerlegt es die Position Kritons, dass die Meinung der Vielen entscheidend sei. Zweitens veranschaulicht es, wessen Meinung eigentlich von Bedeutung ist, nämlich die des Fachmannes.

28 „Von hier aus nun schaue um. Wenn wir, ohne die Stadt zu überreden, von hier weggehen, ob wir dann jemanden schlecht behandeln, und zwar die, welchen es am wenigsten geschehen wollte, oder ob nicht? Und ob wir an dem halten, was wir Billiges versprochen haben oder ob nicht?" (*Crit.* 49e–50a) Diese Übereinkunft, schreibt Paul Shorey, wäre gegenstandslos, wenn sie „a merely logical admission and not rather a voluntary and fairly obtained virtual promise" wäre. Er selbst schließt sich der letzteren Lesart an, der ich ebenfalls zustimme. Shorey 1906: 80–81.

29 Die personifizierten Gesetze Athens, die Platon als Gesprächspartner im Dialog auftreten lässt, werden im Folgenden in Anführungszeichen geschrieben, um sie zum einen von den gesetzlichen Anordnungen eines Staates zu unterscheiden, zum anderen um eine Verwechslungsgefahr mit Platons *Nomoi* auszuschließen.

und ihre Gesetze würden zerstört werden, sollte den gerichtlichen Urteilen der Stadt von Einzelpersonen nicht Folge geleistet werden. Sokrates würde mit einer Flucht ein gerichtliches Urteil missachten. Daraus ergibt sich, dass Sokrates mit einem Fluchtversuch die Stadt und deren Gesetze zerstöre, insofern dies an ihm liegt (*Crit.* 50a–c).

Im zweiten Argument, dem ‚Nutzenargument', erinnern die „Gesetze" Sokrates daran, dass er ihnen seine Existenz, Erziehung und Ausbildung zu verdanken habe. Daraus folgt, dass er insofern als Abkömmling der „Gesetze" bezeichnet werden darf, als sich die „Gesetze" um ihn sorgten wie Eltern um ihre Kinder. Was den Eltern zusteht, stehe den Kindern aufgrund des einseitigen Abhängigkeitsverhältnisses im Umkehrschluss nicht zu. Das Vaterland und die Gesetze seien indes noch höher zu achten als die eigenen Vorfahren. Da Sokrates ein Abkömmling der „Gesetze" ist, gilt das Vergeltungsverbot für ihn in besonderem Maße (*Crit.* 50d–51c). Es folgt das sogenannte ‚Übereinkunftsargument', welches sich wie folgt zusammenfassen lässt: Wer nach dem Kennenlernen und der Zustimmung zu den Gesetzen Athens in der Stadt verweilt, stimmt deren Befolgung zu. Anderenfalls hätte er das Recht zu gehen oder die Möglichkeit, die Gesetze zuerst von dem zu überzeugen, „was eigentlich recht sei" (*Crit.* 51c). Sokrates verweilte sein Leben lang in Athen und war mit den Verfahrensweisen der Stadt bezüglich gerichtlicher Urteile vertraut. Er traf somit mit der Stadt die Übereinkunft, ihren Befehlen zu gehorchen oder sie anderenfalls von einem Besseren zu überzeugen. Die Gesetze verurteilten ihn, den Schierlingsbecher zu trinken. Mit einer Flucht würde Sokrates seiner Strafe entkommen und somit den Befehl der Stadt verweigern, ohne die Stadt zuvor argumentativ von seinen Beweggründen überzeugt zu haben. Letztlich zählen die „Gesetze" die Konsequenzen einer Flucht im Diesseits und Jenseits auf, die sich für Sokrates vielfältig gestalten: Erstens brächte Sokrates seine Freunde in Gefahr, sollten seine Feinde herausfinden, dass sie ihm zur Flucht verholfen haben. Zweitens erfülle Sokrates durch eine Flucht erst den Vorwurf seiner Ankläger, ein Verderber der jungen Menschen zu sein, da in der anderen Stadt, in die er fliehen würde, andere Gesetze gelten, und er immer mit den Gesetzen Athens zufrieden war. Vermutlich stellte er die Gesetze der neuen Stadt in Frage und verführte so tatsächlich die Jugend. Drittens würde Sokrates sich selbst und seinen eigenen Handlungsprinzipien untreu werden, wenn er als Gesetzesbrecher über Tugend und Gerechtigkeit zu reden sucht. In ihrem abschließenden Resümee verweisen die „Gesetze" auf die Konsequenz einer Flucht in der Unterwelt. Sollten ihre ‚Brüder', d. h. die Gesetze der Unterwelt, von seiner Verletzung der Prinzipien im Diesseits erfahren (*Crit.* 54c), bereiteten sie ihm sicherlich keinen angenehmen Empfang.

Zu jedem dieser vier Argumente von Seiten der „Gesetze" lassen sich schnell Gegenargumente finden. Bezüglich des ersten Arguments gilt es beispielsweise zu klären, wie Privatpersonen definiert werden und ob sie tatsächlich fähig sind, die Stadt zu zerstören. Mit der Formulierung „so viel an dir ist" (50b, τὸ σὸν μέρος) legen die „Gesetze" in ihrer Argumentation nahe, dass Einzelpersonen wie Sokrates in der Lage seien, den gesamten Staat zu vernichten. Die gegenteilige These vertritt Allen, wenn er konstatiert: "The City of Athens will not be physically destroyed by the escape of one prisoner; breaking jail is not like sacking Troy. Nor will the escape of one prisoner overthrow the government; breaking jail is not like causing a revolution."[30] Die Schwierigkeit des ‚Nutzenarguments' hingegen zielt auf die schwierige Vergleichbarkeit der Eltern-Kind-Relation mit der des Bürgers und seiner Stadt. Nach Woozley besteht ein Unterschied zwischen der Art des Gehorsams, die Kinder ihren Eltern gegenüber erbringen und derjenigen, die eine Stadt von ihren Bürgern erwarten kann: „The kind of feeling which is natural for a person to have for his parents it is hard to have towards laws."[31] Aufgrund des persönlichen Verhältnisses zu den Eltern würde man ihren Befehlen aus anderen Gründen (Respekt und Fürsorge) folgen, als denen des Staates (Anerkennung des Rechtssystems). Schließlich ist auf das Problem hingewiesen worden, dass der in der Eltern-Stadt-Analogie geforderte Gehorsam nicht auf einer freiwilligen Entscheidung beruhe,[32] was wiederum der Orientierung am besten Logos widerspräche. Gleiches gilt für das ‚Übereinkunftsargument'. Ein weiteres Problem dieses Arguments bezieht sich auf die Konklusion der „Gesetze," dass Sokrates aufgrund der Zufriedenheit mit ihren Gesetzen in der Stadt Athen verblieb. Seine Entscheidung, dort zu verbleiben, könnte auch aus verschiedenen anderen Gründen resultieren: „a city may have other attractions than its law."[33]

Es wurde jedoch nicht nur die Argumentation der „Gesetze" kritisch betrachtet. Auch auf formaler Ebene wirft die Rede der „Gesetze" Fragen auf: Erstens ist es nicht eindeutig, wer oder was genau mit den „Gesetze" gemeint ist. Zweitens ist unklar, wessen Position die personifizierten Gesetze im Dialog repräsentieren. Bezüglich der ersten Problematik ist es ratsam, die genaue Formulierung desjenigen Satzes näher zu betrachten, in dem die „Gesetze" zum ersten Mal im Dialog genannt werden: „εἰ μέλλουσιν ἡμῖν ἐνθένδε εἴτε ἀποδιδράσκειν, εἴθ᾽ ὅπως δεῖ ὀνομάσαι τοῦτο, ἐλθόντες οἱ νόμοι καὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς

30 Allen 1984: 84.
31 Woozley 1979: 68.
32 Farrell 1978: 178.
33 Vlastos 1991: 64.

πόλεως ἐπιστάντες ἔροιντο“[34] (*Crit.* 50 a). Der Zusatz „die Gesetze und das gemeine Wesen dieser Stadt“ findet in der Forschung kaum Berücksichtigung. Eine Ausnahme bildet hier Alfonso Gómez-Lobo, wenn er betont: „This expression [„die Gesetze und das gemeine Wesen dieser Stadt“] indicates that we are dealing here not with peripheral norms, but with the very core of the Athenian legal system.“[35] Wie lässt sich dieser Zusatz deuten? Dies hängt vorrangig davon ab, was mit dem Ausdruck *to koinon* bezeichnet werden soll. Hier sind primär zwei Möglichkeiten aufzuzeigen: Einerseits ließe er sich allgemein mit „das Gemeinsame, das Gemeine“ übersetzen, was den Zusatz „der Stadt“ (τῆς πόλεως) sinnvoll erscheinen lässt, da es den Zusammenhang erläutert. Es bezieht sich dann auf das Gemeinwesen, d. h. auf die Bürgergemeinde Athens. Übersetzt man andererseits *to koinon* mit „Gemeinwesen,“ das bereits eine Art von Gemeinschaft verschiedener Menschen zu implizieren scheint, erfordert dies die nähere Untersuchung des Genitivattributs. Auch in diesem Fall zeichnen sich zwei Interpretationsmöglichkeiten ab: Zum einen könnte es sich um ein Hendiadyoin handeln, bei dem zwei genannte Begriffe für eine einzige Größe stehen. So werden zwar die Gesetze und das Gemeinwesen der Stadt genannt, bezeichnet wird jedoch nur ein Aspekt, der repräsentativ für die komplexe Verbindung von Stadt und Gesetzen steht. Dies würde den Umstand erklären, dass im weiteren Verlauf des *Kriton* ausschließlich von den „Gesetzen“ die Rede ist. Zum anderen könnte es sich bei tês poleôs (τῆς πόλεως) um eine starke Betonung handeln. Falls *to koinon* bereits den (Stadt-)Staat bzw. das Gemeinwesen bedeutet, bewirkte der Zusatz eine starke Hervorhebung der Stadt, möglicherweise in dem Sinne, dass es sich nicht um eine beliebige, sondern um eine ganz besondere Stadt, nämlich Athen, handelt – die Heimatstadt Kritons.

Unabhängig von der Übersetzung findet sich vor dem Hintergrund der Rede der „Gesetze“ und ihres vermeintlich absoluten Gesetzesgehorsams zudem eine Debatte um die Konsistenz des Dialogs. Es wird oftmals auf das Problem hingewiesen, dass man von der Position, welche die „Gesetze“ vertreten, nicht auf die Position des Sokrates schließen kann. Sokrates und die „Gesetze“ könnten im *Kriton* als zwei unterschiedliche Gesprächspartner charakterisiert werden, die voneinander unabhängige Meinungen vertreten können. So wäre es denkbar, dass die „Gesetze“ in ihrer Argumentation Gründe nennen, denen Sokrates nicht ohne weiteres zustimmen würde. Die Meinung der Forscher

34 „Wenn, indem wir von hier davonlaufen wollten, oder wie man dies sonst nennen soll, die Gesetze kämen und das gemeine Wesen dieser Stadt und uns in den Weg tretend fragten.“ Übersetzt von Friedrich Schleiermacher.

35 Gómez-Lobo 1994: 128.

spaltet sich in zwei Lager: Die Konsistenz-Befürworter und die Konsistenz-Gegner, wobei die letztgenannte Gruppe überwiegt.

Auf den ersten Blick erscheint der *Kriton* mit seinen drei unterschiedlichen Gesprächsteilnehmern, die divergierende Positionen nicht nur bezüglich einer möglichen Flucht des Sokrates vertreten, sondern auch bezüglich des für die Untersuchung der Frage nach der Flucht notwendigen Kriteriums der Gerechtigkeit, tatsächlich wenig einheitlich. Entgegen der Position von Roslyn Weiss, die sich in ihrem Werk *Socrates dissatisfied* für die ‚getrennte' Lesart der einzelnen Positionen im Dialog ausspricht, behaupte ich, dass der *Kriton* in sich konsistent ist. In der Zusammenschau der drei Monologe sind einige, parallele Strukturen aufzufinden: Genauso wie Sokrates Kriton zu Beginn des Dialogs erklärte, unter welchen Bedingungen die Untersuchung verlaufen wird (*Crit.* 48e), erläutern nun die „Gesetze" Sokrates, auf welche Weise er sich im Laufe des Dialoges gegenüber den „Gesetzen" zu verhalten habe (*Crit.* 50c). Zudem charakterisieren die „Gesetze" ihre Gesprächsform als „Fragen und Antworten" (*Crit.* 50c). Mit dieser Aussage spielen sie wahrscheinlich auf Sokrates' mäeutische Fragetechnik an, die sich die „Gesetze" nun ihrerseits für ihre Argumentation zu Eigen machen. Sah sich Sokrates zu Beginn des Dialoges noch in der Position, Kriton Fragen zu stellen, übernehmen dies nun die „Gesetze" im zweiten Teil und wenden sich dabei mit ihrer Rede ausschließlich an Sokrates. Da der erste Erklärungsversuch des Sokrates scheiterte, führt er als neuen Gesprächspartner eine höhere Instanz ein, die Kriton akzeptiert und achtet, um seine Argumente auf Gültigkeit hin zu überprüfen. Er hinterfragt nun, wie angekündigt, seine bisherige Position. Sokrates wird zum ‚Schüler', während die „Gesetze" seine vorherige Rolle übernehmen. Dies ermöglicht Sokrates, einen objektiveren Standpunkt einzunehmen: Er argumentiert nicht mehr mit Kriton, sondern muss sich jetzt den „Gesetzen" gegenüber verteidigen. Kriton hingegen profitiert zweifach von der Einführung der „Gesetze": Erstens verringert sie den Abstraktionsgrad der Beweisführung des Sokrates, indem er Kriton vor Augen führt, auf wen sich die Ungerechtigkeit einer Flucht genau bezieht. Zweitens kann Kriton sich als passiver Beobachter aus der konkreten Redesituation zurückziehen und ist nicht mehr in der Pflicht, die Fragen beantworten zu müssen.[36]

Weiss' These ist in Frage zu stellen, wenn sie behauptet, dass Sokrates die ideale Gesprächsform für Kriton opfern muss.[37] Die „Gesetze" binden

36 Vgl. Unruh 2000: 100; Miller 1996: 126.

37 Vgl. Weiss 1998: 147. Nach Weiss geht mit dem Eintritt der „Gesetze" in den Dialog eine Änderung der Gesprächsform einher: „In place of Socrates' question-and-answer-style [...] we find the Laws' lengthy harangues replete with accusations and threats" (84).

Sokrates mit Hilfe ihrer Fragen immer wieder in den Dialog mit ein, so dass die Gesprächsform auch im weiteren Verlauf erhalten bleibt. Kriton, der während der Rede der „Gesetze“ in den Hintergrund getreten ist, wird von Sokrates dreimal (*Crit.* 50c, 51c, 52d) wieder in den Dialog integriert. Dies erfolgt an den für die Argumentation wesentlichen Stellen, da sich Sokrates auf diese Weise vergewissert, dass Kriton sie nachvollziehen kann. Der eigentliche Adressat der Rede der „Gesetze“ scheint Kriton zu sein, der stets zustimmt. Zu diesem Schluss kommt auch Roslyn Weiss. Sie behauptet, dass die Rede der personifizierten Gesetze Kriton inhaltlich auf den Leib geschneidert („tailor-made“[38]) sei. Nach Weiss orientierten sich die „Gesetze“ an seinen Belangen, die, von einem philosophischen Standpunkt aus betrachtet, keine oder nur wenig Relevanz hätten, und präsentierten Kriton eine neue Konzeption von Gerechtigkeit, die er verstehen kann.[39] Bemerkenswert ist, dass sich die „Gesetze“ sowohl Kritons Wortwahl bedienen als auch inhaltlich Bezug auf ihn nehmen. So sprechen beide Sokrates’ lebenslanges tugendhaftes Verhalten an: Kriton konstatiert, dass Sokrates sich sein ganzes Leben hindurch der Tugend befleißigt habe (45d: φάσκοντά γε δὴ ἀρετῆς διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου ἐπιμελεῖσθαι). Auch die „Gesetze“ versäumen nicht, Sokrates an seine lebenslange Tätigkeit zu erinnern: „du, der sich in Wahrheit und Tugend befleißigt“ (53c: ὁ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελόμενος). Auffällig ist, dass sich die „Gesetze“ besonders bei der Aufzählung der Konsequenzen, die Sokrates durch eine Fluchthandlung drohen, an Kritons im ersten Teil des Dialogs genannten Argumenten orientieren. So behaupten sie, dass Sokrates, sollte er in eine andere Stadt fliehen, dem Gerichtsurteil erst gerecht würde und seinen Feinden recht gäbe, da er dort, als „Verderber der [dort geltenden] Gesetze“ (*Crit.* 53 b) gelte und bei einer Fortführung seiner bisherigen Tätigkeit die dortige Jugend verdürbe. Nicht durch den Verbleib im Gefängnis, wie es Kriton darstellte, sondern erst durch eine Flucht erwiese sich sein Verhalten als untugendhaft, da er die Wichtigkeit von Gesetzen proklamiere, die dortigen jedoch nicht anerkennt, weil er mit den Gesetzen Athens stets zufrieden war. Auch auf den Vorwurf der Unmännlichkeit und Feigheit wissen die „Gesetze“ zu reagieren, indem sie darlegen, dass die wahre Unmännlichkeit in der Flucht bestehe (*Crit.* 53d: „wie lächerlich du aus dem Gefängnis entlaufen bist“). Feige würde sich Sokrates nach Meinung der personifizierten Gesetze erst verhalten, wenn er verkleidet dem Gefängnis entfliehe, damit er unerkannt bleibt. Durch seine Verkleidung (53d: „in irgendein Zeug eingehüllt“) stünde er nicht zu sich selbst und wäre sich selbst untreu. Letztlich verweisen die personifizierten Gesetze auch auf den Vorwurf

38 Weiss 1998: 148.

39 Ebenso Harte 2005: 243–244.

Kritons, Sokrates sorge sich nicht um seine Söhne. Um sie selbst erziehen zu können, müsste Sokrates sie mit nach Thessalien nehmen und mache sie auf diese Weise zu Fremden, indem er sie entwurzelt. Die „Gesetze" versichern, dass sich nach seinem Tod Sokrates' Freunde seinen Kindern annehmen und sie in seinem Sinne erziehen werden.

Sie lehnen sich jedoch nicht nur inhaltlich an Kritons Argumente an, sie übernehmen teilweise auch seinen Stil, beispielsweise die Übertreibung. Sowohl Kriton als auch die „Gesetze" steigern sich in ihre Argumentation hinein. Kritons Überzeugungsversuch mündet in Beleidigungen und folgende Ermahnung: „Sieh wohl zu, dass es nicht außer dem Unglück auch zur Schande gereiche, dir wie uns" (46a). Vergleichbar pessimistisch prophezeien die Gesetze Sokrates' Zukunft, sollte er nicht auf sie hören: „Kriechend also vor allen Menschen wirst du leben" (53e). Auch die Handlungsaufforderungen von Seiten Kritons und der personifizierten Gesetze ähneln sich sehr: Gleich zweimal fordert Kriton, Sokrates solle ihm gehorchen: „Gehorche mir und tue ja nicht anders" (45a, sowie, nahezu identisch: 46a). Auch die Gesetze vergessen nicht, Sokrates anzuhalten, er solle auf sie hören: „Also Sokrates, gehorche uns, deinen Erziehern" (54b).

Eine weitere Parallele zwischen dem ersten und zweiten Teil des Dialogs zeigt sich darin, dass die „Gesetze" auf Sokrates' Rede im ersten Teil Bezug nehmen. Aus dieser ging hervor, dass der beste Logos zusammenfassend mit folgenden Aspekten einhergeht: Rationalität durch die Orientierung am besten Prüfungsergebnis, Gerechtigkeit und Glückseligkeit als Folge des am besten Logos orientierten Handelns, weil dieses gut und gerecht ist, sowie die Wahrheit, da im *Kriton* deutlich wird, dass der Fachmann für das Gerechte auch der Fachmann für die Wahrheit selbst ist. Wahrheit und Gerechtigkeit sind folglich eng miteinander verwoben.[40] Diese Kriterien werden von den „Gesetzen" in ihrer Rede wieder aufgegriffen und zur Beantwortung der Fluchtfrage auf die Angelegenheiten des Staates bezogen. Sowohl das Rechtsicherheitsargument als auch das Nutzenargument ließen sich auf ein Zusammenwirken der zweiten und dritten Prämisse zurückführen: Mit einer Flucht würde Sokrates Vergeltung ausüben (vgl. Prämisse 2) und damit unrecht handeln, weil er die Stadt schlecht behandelte bzw. „die, welchen es am wenigstens geschehen wollte" (*Crit.* 50a) (vgl. Prämisse 3). Das Übereinkunftsargument zielt hingegen eindeutig auf die vierte Prämisse. Letztlich ist anzumerken, dass allen Gesprächspartnern im *Kriton* ein gemeinsamer Referenzpunkt zugrunde liegt: die Gerechtigkeit. Kriton ist, wie sich gezeigt hat, ein Stellvertreter der standardisierten, gesellschaftlich anerkannten Moralvorstellung der Vielen,

40 Vgl. Ackeren o. J.

wenn er den Schwerpunkt auf den Schutz seiner Freunde und den Widerstand gegen die Feinde legt. Sokrates hingegen bezieht sich auf den individuellen Zustand der Seele des Einzelnen, der sich durch gerechtes und tugendhaftes Handeln verdient macht und somit Eudämonie erfährt. Die „Gesetze" hingegen beziehen ihr Verständnis von Gerechtigkeit auf die Belange der Stadt. Nicht zu vergessen ist, dass es sich bei den „Gesetze" ‚formal betrachtet, um eine Personifikation, eine *prosôpoiia* (προσωποποιΐα) handelt, die eng mit der Figur des Sokrates verknüpft ist. Dieser ‚rhetorische Kniff' dient dazu, Kriton Sokrates' Position zu veranschaulichen. Die „Gesetze" scheinen durch ihre Rolle als Fachmann in Staatsangelegenheiten und als ‚Lehrer' des Sokrates – wenn man dies annehmen mag – diesem zwar als überlegen, letztlich ist es aber Sokrates selbst, der sie sprechen lässt. Er kennt das Resultat der Untersuchung bereits im Voraus; um objektiv bleiben zu können, muss er sich von seinem eigenen Standpunkt distanzieren. Die „Gesetze" wiederholen letztlich die Prinzipien, die Sokrates im ersten Teil des Dialoges erläutert hat. Sie verlegen diese nur in einen anderen Kontext.[41] Zudem übernehmen sie seine Dialog- und Argumentationsform. Somit fungieren die personifizierten Gesetze zwar formal als neuer Gesprächspartner des Sokrates, vertreten jedoch keine von ihm abweichende Position.

Beim *Kriton* handelt es sich, wie eingangs erwähnt, um einen Frühdialog Platons. Er unterscheidet sich jedoch von den anderen Frühdialogen dahingehend, dass keine spezifische „*ti-esti*"-Frage gestellt, keine Definition gesucht wird, sondern eine ganz konkrete Handlungsentscheidung gefordert ist: Soll Sokrates fliehen oder nicht? Sokrates bleibt zwar im Gefängnis, aber zeigen die Argumente der „Gesetze" wirklich die Ungerechtigkeit einer Flucht aus Sokrates' Perspektive auf? Die Frage bleibt also weiterhin bestehen:

4 Warum ist Sokrates nicht geflohen?

Auf diese Frage möchte ich zwei mögliche Antworten nennen: Ein erster Lösungsansatz könnte darin liegen, dass die „Gesetze" über den besten Logos verfügen und Sokrates auf diese Weise argumentativ überzeugen, nicht zu fliehen. In ihrer Rede widerlegten die personifizierten Gesetze Athens die Argumente Kritons. Dies wird besonders in der letzten Passage der Rede der „Gesetze" deutlich, in denen sie Sokrates die Konsequenzen einer möglichen Flucht

41 Auch Unruh 2000: 99 bestätigt, dass „die in der vorhergehenden dialektischen Erörterung als gültig erkannten Prinzipien und Ableitungen in rhetorischer Verkleidung auf neue Weise, aber substantiell identisch, vorgetragen werden."

aufzählen (*Crit.* 53a–54d). Zum anderen greifen sie die Handlungsprinzipien des Sokrates wieder auf und wenden sie auf die aktuelle Situation an, woraus resultiert, dass eine Flucht ungerecht wäre.

Die zweite Möglichkeit besteht darin, dass die „Gesetze" nicht unbedingt über den besten Logos verfügen. Da es sich um einen Frühdialog handelt, von denen die Mehrzahl aporetische Züge aufweist, wird keine allgemeingültige Handlungsentscheidung präsentiert. Die Frage, ob eine Flucht gerechterweise vonstattengehen kann oder nicht, wird nicht direkt beantwortet. Es konnte kein besserer Logos in Bezug auf die Gerechtigkeit einer möglichen Flucht gefunden werden, weshalb, wie von Sokrates im ersten Teil des Dialogs festgelegt, die alten Reden weiterhin Bestand haben und Sokrates daher im Gefängnis verbleibt (*Crit.* 48c). Dennoch hat Platon im *Kriton* etwas Wesentliches vorgeführt: Erstens die Wichtigkeit des allgemeinen Aufrufs, sich Gedanken über das eigene Handeln zu machen, die daraus entspringenden Konsequenzen zu beachten – und das in jeder Situation, die eine Handlungsentscheidung erfordert. Zweitens die Wichtigkeit der Prüfung der Kriterien der Sokratischen Ethik. Auch die ethischen Prinzipien des Sokrates müssen durchdacht werden, auf deren alleiniger Basis eine Entscheidung sehr schwierig ist. Schließlich die Wichtigkeit der Prüfung der Gesetze, an die man sich hält, die gegebenenfalls einer Änderung unterzogen werden müssen. Im *Kriton* wird keine in sich abgeschlossene politische Theorie entwickelt. Da im Dialog jedoch das gerechte Handeln bzw. ‚das, was zu tun ist' thematisiert wird, muss er dies an dieser Stelle vielleicht auch nicht leisten.

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CHAPTER 7

Das δαιμόνιον im *Theages* und der Weg zur Weisheit

Giusy Maria Margagliotta

Abstract

The *Theages* offers an alternative solution to that in the dialogues which are seen as Plato's with regard to the question of the educational purpose of Socrates. Even though he claims to be clueless, it is undeniable that the people who accompany him are making progress towards the acquisition of knowledge. Plato had introduced the maieutic method in his *Theaetetus*, in order to explain how this could be possible. The author of the *Theages* proposes another idea, namely that of the transmission of knowledge through physical contact – a representation which confers to Socrates a magical and thaumaturgic character that cannot be reconciled with the one which emerges from Plato's dialogs. In this context, we can see that the Socratic δαιμόνιον has a redeeming role in both dialogues since it permits and prohibits contact between Socrates and certain other individuals and consequently allows some to get closer to him or rather to knowledge itself. The *Theages* is nonetheless different from other works of the corpus platonicum when it comes to the description of the demonic sign, and this represents evidence that it is not authentic. The daimonic sign is not described as the vague τὸ δαιμόνιον which Platon writes about, but is presented as a sort of personal oracle which provides predictions of future events and prophecies. This is on the one hand indicated by the fact that the author of this work uses the term δύναμις in order to refer to it, by which he underlines an active power as opposed to Plato's image of the δαιμόνιον as an apotreptic and inhibiting sign. On the other hand, it is indicated by the conclusion of the dialogue, in which Theages proposes that Socrates put the divine sign to the test or to calm it down with prayers, sacrifices and all the other methods indicated by the fortune tellers. Those are proceedings which were part of the traditional religious beliefs related to gods and δαίμονες but not to the divine or demonic sign received by Socrates and described by Plato in his dialogues.

Die Frage nach der Rolle des Sokrates als „Erzieher" beim Erlangen von Erkenntnis und Weisheit seiner Schüler wird sehr kontrovers diskutiert, da Sokrates selbst behauptete, er wisse nichts. In diesem Artikel werden zwei Lösungen

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für das Problem des Erkenntnisgewinns verglichen, die der platonische Dialog *Theaitetos* und ein weiterer zweifelhafter Authentizität, der *Theages*, zum Ausdruck kommen. Insbesondere wird sowohl die Rolle untersucht, die die Autoren dieser Dialoge in diesem Zusammenhang dem δαιμόνιον des Sokrates' zuschreiben, als auch dessen Macht, Funktionen und erzieherische Wirksamkeit.[1]

I

Der *Theages* enthält die längste uns aus Primärquellen überlieferte Darstellung des δαιμόνιον des Sokrates.

In der Antike wurde dieser Dialog ohne Zweifel Platons Feder zugeschrieben, doch wurde von Schleiermacher[2] an dessen Echtheit bezweifelt, weil er sich in einigen wesentlichen Merkmalen mit den platonischen Dialogen als unvereinbar erweist.

1 Vgl. Carlini 1962: 33–63, 43.

2 Schleiermacher 1826: 253.

3 Zu den Forschern, die behaupten, dass der *Theages* aus der Feder Platons stamme, können folgende gerechnet werden: Socher 1820; Müller, Steinhart 1857: 496; Waddington 1887; Grote 1865; Friedländer 1930; Pangle 1987; Pangle 1985; Cobb 1992; Trabattoni 1998; Altman 2011; Reale 2015.

Pangle (1985) behauptet, dass dieser Dialog einerseits grundsätzlich mit den anderen platonischen Werken übereinstimme und anderseits einen neunen Interpretationsansatz für die Frage nach dem historischen Sokrates biete (136, Anm. 1). Friedländer befürwortet, wenn auch vorsichtig, die Vereinbarkeit der Beschreibung von Sokrates und seinem δαιμόνιον im *Theages* mit derjenigen von Platon (309–311). Trabattoni schlägt eine innovative Interpretation dieses Dialoges vor, indem er sagt, dass seine Echtheit anhand der Elemente zu beweisen sei, die eigentlich für seine Unechtheit zu sprechen scheinen: die besondere Darstellung des dämonischen Zeichens und die Beschreibung von Sokrates selbst als Thaumaturg. Trabattoni behauptet nämlich: "L'intenzione di questo dialogo doveva essere quella di mostrare che il magistero di Socrate, per quanto apprezzabile, non possedeva in ogni caso le caratteristiche di un sapere scientifico governabile e controllabile a piacimento della ragione. Da qui l'insistenza sul segno demonico, sull'imponderabilità dei suoi suggerimenti, sul fatto che i benefici impartiti da Socrate fossero dovuti soprattutto alla felice casualità del favore divino (θεία μοῖρα)" (203). Altman sagt, dass die Echtheit von zweifelhaften Werken wie diesem anhand der chronologischen Reihenfolge der platonischen Dialoge beweisbar sei (1). Er behauptet tatsächlich, dass die sich ergänzenden Andeutungen auf die Figur des Theages und auf die Rolle des sokratischen δαιμόνιον in der platonischen *Apologie*, im *Theages* und in der *Politeia* zeigten, dass der Leser der *Politeia* die im *Theages* vorhandenen Behauptungen vor Augen haben sollte, um den Zusammenhang des dämonischen Zeichens von Sokrates und der labilen Gesundheit von Theages in der *Politeia* besser verstehen zu können. Nur wenn man davon ausginge, dass in der *Politeia* Theages nur erwähnt wird, um auf den homonymen Dialog hinzuweisen, werde diese Passage auch für einen Leser verständlich, der die *Apologie* nicht gelesen hat (16).

Die Frage der Echtheit dieses Dialoges ist immer noch sehr umstritten: Einige Forscher halten ihn ohne Zweifel für authentisch,[3] andere für unecht,[4] und andere wiederum beziehen keine klare Stellung.[5]

Die Kriterien, welche die Echtheit eines Werkes bestimmen, können in zwei Kategorien unterteilt werden: (1) Einerseits gibt es formale Maßstäbe, und zwar jene, die Stilunterschiede, sprachliche Anachronismen und Andeutungen auf Elemente betreffen, die zeigen, dass die analysierten Dialoge unterschiedlichen historisch-kulturellen Kontexten angehören; (2) anderseits gibt es Kriterien, die den Inhalt betreffen, d.h. die Elemente, die mit den Aussagen und Ideen des Autors in anderen Werken verglichen werden müssen.[6]

Es ist zwar wahr, dass die Maßstäbe der zweiten Kategorie nicht ganz zuverlässig sind, weil derselbe Autor verschiedene Meinungen zu unterschiedlichen Zeitpunkten ausdrücken könnte, und weil, wie Friedländer behauptet, die klassische Philologie keine sicheren Methoden besitzt, wie z.B. jene der Kunstkritik, um echte Werke von Werken zu unterscheiden, die von Schülern eines Meisters stammen, an denen der Meister vielleicht nur etwas hinzugefügt hat;[7] allerdings ist es nicht der Zweck dieser Abhandlung, die Diskussion über die Echtheit des *Theages* und die Hypothesen über dessen Autorschaft zu thematisieren, sondern zu analysieren, wie das *daimonion* des Sokrates in Bezug auf den Lernprozess in diesem Dialog im Vergleich zu einem zweifelsfrei echten platonischen Dialog, dem *Theaitetos*, dargestellt wird.

Die Beschreibung des *daimonion* im *Theages* gibt den Befürwortern der Echtheit dieses Werkes, wie denen der Unechtheit, Gründe, um ihre jeweiligen Thesen zu fundieren. Heinrich Maier behauptet nämlich: "Dieses apokryphe Machwerk scheint sich zunächst äußerlich in der Schilderung der Funktionsweise des Daimonions an die platonische Beschreibung anzuschließen".[8]

In dieser Schilderung des dämonischen Zeichens gibt es einige Ähnlichkeiten mit den platonischen Zeugnissen des δαιμόνιον: Hier, wie auch bei den Dialogen des platonischen *corpus*, wird das Wort τὸ δαιμόνιον verwendet,[9] um auf das Zeichen des Sokrates hinzudeuten. Und genau wie bei den Dialogen

4 Unter jenen, die diesen Dialog für unecht halten, gibt es auf einer Seite diejenigen, die denken, dass sein Autor ein Zeitgenosse oder ein Vorgänger Platons sei, und dass Platon später einige Elemente des *Theages* in seine Werke aufgenommen habe (Janell 1901: 427–439), und auf der anderen Seite jene, die behaupten, dass dieser Dialog später entstanden sei (Bruns 1896: 345–347; Pavlu 1909: 33–36; Souilhé 1920: 131–133; Tarrant 1938; Id. 1958: 95; Joyal 2000). Zur Unechtheit des *Theages* siehe auch: Centrone 1997; Id. 1997: 331–332; Döring 2004.

5 Bailly 2004.

6 Vgl. Trabattoni 1998: 193.

7 Vgl. Friedländer 1930: 141–142.

8 Maier 1913: 453.

9 Pl., *Theag.*, 128d3: δαιμόνιον; 128e5: τοῦ δαιμονίου; 129a3: τοῦ δαιμονίου; 129b8: τὸ δαιμόνιον; 129e2: τοῦ δαιμονίου; 129e8: τοῦ δαιμονίου; 131a2: τοῦ δαιμονίου.

Platons und Xenophons ist es nicht der Ausdruck des moralischen Gewissens, weil es sich nur zeigt, um Sokrates und seine Freunde abzuhalten, etwas zu unternehmen, was sich am Ende für sie als ungünstig erweisen würde. So schreibt Mark Joyal: "there is no question of the soul's well-being if someone disobeys the warnings of τὸ δαιμόνιον".[10] Allerdings reicht dies nicht aus, die Darstellung Platons und die des Autors des *Theages* gleichzusetzen: Es gibt große Unterschiede, die im Laufe dieses Aufsatzes untersucht werden, die ein so großes Gewicht haben, dass Centrone behauptet: "proprio nel modo in cui viene concepito il demone il *Teage* sembra discostarsi da quanto se ne dice degli altri dialoghi del *corpus*, tanto da presentare un'interpretazione generale della figura di Socrate e della natura del suo insegnamento che non risulta in sintonia con la descrizione platonica."[11]

II

Der Inhalt dieses Dialoges ist bekannt: Demodokos, Vater des jungen Theages, ist um die Zukunft des Sohnes besorgt, weil letzterer das Wissen erwerben will, um Politiker zu werden und den Staat zu regieren; der Vater meint aber, dass es schädlich für seinen Sohn sein könnte, ihn zu einem Sophisten zu schicken, weil dieser seine Seele verderben könnte. Also wendet er sich an Sokrates, um sich über den besten pädagogischen Weg für Theages beraten zu lassen. Der Philosoph fragt den Jungen nach der Bedeutung des Begriffes „Weisheit" (σοφία), und fragt ihn, welche Person ihm am besten helfen könne, sie zu erlangen. Am Ende dieses Gespräches erklärt sich der junge Mann bereit, Sokrates' Schüler zu werden, nachdem er sich darüber bewusst geworden ist, welche großen geistigen Fortschritte diejenigen gemacht haben, die sich Sokrates anvertraut hatten.

Anhand dessen beginnt Sokrates eine lange Abhandlung über sein δαιμόνιον und die Macht, die dieses sowohl auf ihn selbst als auch auf seine Freunde ausübt.

Der dämonologische Abschnitt des *Theages* kann in zwei Teile unterteilt werden: Im ersten Teil berichtet der Autor in vier Erzählungen von der Art und Weise, in der das dämonische Zeichen sich zeigt, das nicht nur die Gefährten des Sokrates,[12] sondern auch die Stadt Athen beschützt. Im zweiten Teil erhellt

10 Joyal 2000: 72.

11 Centrone 1997: 17–18. Vgl. Aronadio 2008: 44.

12 *Theag.*, 129e1–3: Ταῦτα δὴ πάντα εἴρηκά σοι, ὅτι ἡ δύναμις αὕτη τοῦ δαιμονίου τούτου καὶ εἰς τὰς συνουσίας τῶν μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ συνδιατριβόντων τὸ ἅπαν δύναται ("Dies alles habe

der Autor die Rolle des δαιμόνιον in der Beziehung zwischen dem Philosophen und seinen Freunden: Es zeigt sich, um Sokrates den Kontakt mit Personen, die diesen erwünschen, zu gewähren oder zu verhindern, um so zu entscheiden, ob diese Personen Fortschritte im Wissenserwerb machen oder nicht.

Die Erzählungen im ersten Teil können in zwei Gruppen unterteilt werden: Die ersten beiden thematisieren die Wirkung des δαιμόνιον in Bezug auf die Gefährten des Sokrates, die letzten beiden dessen Wirkung auf den Staat.

In der ersten Erzählung wird davon berichtet, dass Charmides eines Tages zu Sokrates ging, um ihm mitzuteilen, er wolle in das Stadion in Nemea gehen, um sich im Laufen zu trainieren. Während der junge Mann noch sprach, machte sich die Stimme (ἡ φωνή: 128e3) des δαιμόνιον bemerkbar, so dass Sokrates versuchte den jungen Mann von seinem Vorhaben abzubringen (128e2–5). Charmides erwiderte darauf, dass die göttliche Mahnung vielleicht nur bedeute, dass er nicht gewinnen würde, aber ein körperliches Training doch in jedem Falle nützlich sei. Also fing er an zu trainieren, und allem Anschein nach ist ihm, wie man aus einer abschließenden Bemerkung des Sokrates vermuten kann, tatsächlich etwas Schlimmes widerfahren (128d7–8).

Diese Darstellung ist viel näher an der des Xenophon als an der platonischen, weil für Platon die Wirkung des göttlichen Zeichens sich lediglich auf Sokrates beschränkt, während sie bei Xenophon auch seine Freunde miteinbezieht; Xenophon erwähnt nicht die Anwesenheit von Personen, wenn sich Sokrates das δαιμόνιον zeigte,[13] doch der Autor des *Theages* geht weiter, weil seine Aussagen vermuten lassen, dass andere Personen dabei anwesend waren (καὶ τούτων ὑμῖν μάτρυρας παρέξομαι: 128d7–8).

Einige Details lassen vermuten, dass der Autor des *Theages* auch von der Volksreligion beeinflusst worden ist. In derselben Passage behauptet Sokrates, das dämonische Wirken begleite ihn bereits seit der Kindheit “aufgrund göttlicher Fügung” (θείᾳ μοίρᾳ παρεπόμενον: 128d2). Die Tatsache, dass ihm “aufgrund göttlicher Fügung” ein δαιμόνιον zugeteilt wurde, stammt aus dem religiösen Glauben Griechenlands jener Zeit; anscheinend setzt der Autor das sokratische δαιμόνιον mit den δαίμονες gleich, wodurch er sich deutlich von der platonischen Darstellung und generell von der sokratischen Literatur entfernt.[14]

Auch die zweite Erzählung gibt aufschlussreiche Denkanstöße. Sokrates erzählt, dass Timarchos sich einmal erhoben hat, um das Symposion zu verlassen, bei dem beide anwesend waren, um Nikias töten zu gehen – solch ein

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ich dir erzählt, weil die Macht dieses Dämonischen auch im Hinblick auf meinen Umgang mit denen, die sich mir anschließen, allmächtig ist.” Übers. K. Döring).

13 Vgl. Joyal 2000: 73.

14 Vgl. Nilsson 1967: 361–368.

Komplott war Sokrates allerdings nicht bekannt. Doch bevor er ging, wandte er sich an Sokrates und fragte ihn: “Was meinst du, Sokrates? Trinkt ihr nur weiter. Ich muß aufstehen und anderswohin gehen. Doch ich werde in Kürze wieder hier sein, wenn alles gut geht.”[15] In diesem Augenblick vernahm Sokrates das göttliche Zeichen (καί μοι ἐγένετο ἡ φωνή: 129b6–7) und versuchte, Timarchos von seinem Vorhaben abzubringen. Er konnte ihn überzeugen, zu bleiben. Wenig später wandte sich Timarchos abermals an Sokrates und sagte: Εἶμι δή, Σώκρατες (129c1–2), doch wieder kam die Stimme, und Sokrates zwang Timarchos zu bleiben (129c3–4). Das dritte Mal dagegen erhob er sich, ohne Sokrates zu fragen (129c4–6), und ging fort, um das zu tun, was ihm selbst den Tod bringen sollte.

Wenn wir uns von dieser Erzählung alle szenischen und dramatischen Elemente wegdenken, entdecken wir etwas Überraschendes: Das göttliche Zeichen vernimmt Sokrates nur dann, wenn er sich der Versuche des Timarchos, das Symposion zu verlassen, um Nikias umzubringen, vollkommen bewusst ist.[16] Er interveniert also nur bei den ersten beiden Versuchen, wenn er von Timarchos gefragt wird, während sich das göttliche Zeichen beim letzten Versuch, als dieser geht, ohne die Aufmerksamkeit des Philosophen auf sich zu ziehen, nicht vernehmen lässt. Das könnte bedeuten, dass das sokratische δαιμόνιον nicht absolut allwissend ist. Auch diese Eigenschaft lässt sich insofern auf die Volksreligion zurückführen, als die Vorstellung einer nicht absoluten Allwissenheit der δαίμονες, die als Vermittler zwischen Göttern und Menschen fungieren, dem populären religiösen Glauben der Griechen eigen ist.[17]

Die dritte Erzählung betrifft den Feldzug in Sizilien. Sokrates sagt dazu: “Darüber hinaus werdet ihr beide in Bezug auf die Ereignisse in Sizilien von vielen erzählt bekommen, was ich über den Untergang des Heeres gesagt habe” (129c8–d2).[18] Diese Passage ist sehr kurz und gibt uns nicht genügend Hinweise, um eine Aussage über eine sichere Verbindung zwischen dem göttlichen Zeichen, das Sokrates erhielt, und der militärischen Katastrophe zu ziehen.

Die vierte Erzählung ist dagegen viel aufschlussreicher. Hier liest man, dass sich die göttliche Stimme Sokrates in dem Moment zeigte, als Sannion “der Schöne” in den Krieg ziehen wollte (ἐπὶ γὰρ τῇ ἐπὶ στρατείαν ἐξορμῇ Σαννίωνος

15 Pl., *Theag.*, 129b4–6: τί λέγεις, ὦ Σώκρατες; ὑμεῖς μὲν πίνετε, ἐμὲ δὲ δεῖ ποι ἐξαναστῆναι· ἥξω δὲ ὀλίγον ὕστερον, ἐὰν τύχω. Übers. K. Döring.

16 Vgl. Joyal 2000: 78.

17 Vgl. Nilsson 1967: 367.

18 Übers. K. Döring.

τοῦ καλοῦ ἐγένετό μοι τὸ σημεῖον: 129d4–5). Er sagte das seinem Freund, doch hörte dieser nicht auf ihn und begab sich zum Heer der Athener, das zu der Zeit unter dem Kommando des Thrasyllos stand und kurz davor war, gegen Ephesos ins Feld zu ziehen (409 v. Chr.). Sokrates endete seine Rede folgendermaßen: "Er ist jetzt zusammen mit Thrasyllos unterwegs auf dem Feldzug in Richtung Ephesos und Ionien. Ich glaube nun, dass er entweder sein Leben verliert, oder jedenfalls etwas erleidet, was dem ziemlich nahe kommt; und überhaupt ängstige ich mich wegen der Unternehmung sehr."[19]

Diese Erzählungen zeigen die Vergrößerung des Wirkungsbereiches des göttlichen Zeichens: Es tritt nicht nur zu apotreptischen Zwecken zugunsten Sokrates' und seiner Freunde auf (und hier liegt, wie wir gesehen haben, ein großer Unterschied zur platonischen Darstellung), sondern auch zugunsten der Polis im Allgemeinen.

Darüber hinaus muss gesagt werden, dass Sokrates nicht behauptet, die Weisungen des Zeichens seien vollkommen unfehlbar. Dies lässt sich aus der Tatsache schließen, dass er keine endgültige Aussage über das Schicksal des Sannion trifft, sondern "glaubt" (οἴομαι: 129d7), er werde sterben, und um das Heer und den Ausgang des Feldzuges "fürchtet" (φοβοῦμαι: 129d8). Auf jeden Fall scheint es, als wolle der Autor eine Vorstellung des δαιμόνιον geben, die allen verständlich ist und in Einklang mit dem Volksglauben steht.

Anhand dieser Anekdoten kann man ersehen, inwiefern sich das göttliche Zeichen, wie es vom Autor dieses Dialoges dargestellt wird, von demjenigen des *corpus platonicum* unterscheidet:

1. Während bei Platon das dämonische Zeichen einen apotreptischen Charakter hat, zeigt es sich im *Theages* aktiv, sei es, um Sokrates in seiner Meinung zu bekräftigen, sei es, um ihn von ihr abzubringen, wie ein persönliches Orakel. Dies auch, wenn der Autor am Anfang des Dialoges Sokrates sagen lässt, dass sein δαιμόνιον eine Stimme sei, die ihn von Kindheit an begleite, und dass es ihn immer von seinen Handlungen abbringe, ihn jedoch nie dazu treibe, eine Handlung auszuführen[20] – was

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19 Pl., *Theag.*, 129d5–8: οἴχεται δὲ νῦν μετὰ Θρασύλλου στρατευσόμενος εὐθὺ Ἐφέσου καὶ Ἰωνίας. ἐγὼ οὖν οἴομαι ἐκεῖνον ἢ ἀποθανεῖσθαι ἢ ὁμοῦ τι τούτῳ γ᾽ἐλᾶν, καὶ περί γε τῆς στρατιᾶς τῆς ἄλλης πάνυ φοβοῦμαι. Übers. K. Döring.

20 Pl., *Thg.*, 128d2–5: ἔστι γάρ τι θείᾳ μοίρᾳ παρεπόμενον ἐμοὶ ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξάμενον δαιμόνιον. ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο φωνή, ἣ ὅταν γένηται ἀεί μοι σημαίνει, ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, τούτου ἀποτροπήν, προτρέπει δὲ οὐδέποτε ("Es gibt etwas Dämonisches, das mich aufgrund göttlicher Fügung seit meiner Kindheit begleitet. Es ist dies eine Stimme, die, sooft sie sich vernehmen läßt,

an den Abschnitt 31 D der *Apologie* des Platon erinnert, denn hier lässt Platon Sokrates Folgendes sagen: “Ich habe das von Jugend auf, eine gewisse Stimme, die, wenn sie sich hören läßt, mich jedesmal warnt vor dem, was ich gerade vorhabe, niemals aber zuredet.”[21]

2. Im *Theages* zielt die Wirkung des δαιμόνιον nicht nur auf Sokrates, sondern auch auf seine Freunde und das Schicksal der Polis. Der Verfasser des Dialogs lässt Sokrates zu Theages sagen: “Dies alles habe ich dir erzählt, weil die Macht dieses Dämonischen auch im Hinblick auf meinen Umgang mit denen, die sich mir anschließen, allmächtig ist.”[22]
3. Die Vergrößerung des Wirkungsbereiches des göttlichen Zeichens stimmt mit der Tendenz des Autors des *Theages* überein, das δαιμόνιον des Sokrates generell den Prophezeiungen anzunähern.[23] So verleiht er ihm eine orakelhafte Macht und rückt es in einigen Aspekten in die Nähe der Aussagen Xenophons.

Dennoch wäre es falsch zu sagen, der Autor des *Theages* habe sich auf die Aussagen des Xenophon bezogen. Denn sonst müsste man auch die Schriften anderer Autoren, die der Tradition näher sind, auf diese Weise rechtfertigen – und das wäre inakzeptabel. Es stimmt zwar, dass der Autor dieses Dialoges die Werke Xenophons kannte, aber daraus kann man keine Rückschlüsse auf die Abhängigkeit der Werke ziehen.[24] Es ist wahrscheinlicher, dass er sich auf die mündliche Überlieferung bezogen hat: Der *Theages* ist nämlich kein einheitlicher Dialog und deshalb kann man nicht ausschließen, dass der Autor unterschiedliche Quellen zur Verfügung hatte.

Zweifellos hatte er das platonische Vorbild vor Augen: Im ersten Teil des dämonologischen Abschnitts hat der Autor offenbar auf die platonische *Apologie* zurückgegriffen. Allerdings hat er dieses Vorbild verändert (oder verzerrt), indem er Elemente der Volksreligion oder der Tradition hinzugefügt hat, und dafür hat er ein für diesen Zweck geeignetes Mittel genutzt: die Anekdote.[25]

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mir stets anzeigt, ich solle etwas, was ich gerade tun will, unterlassen, mich aber nie zu etwas ermuntert.” Übers. K. Döring).

21 Pl. *Apol.*, 31d2–4: ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ἐκ παιδὸς ἀρξάμενον, φωνή τις γιγνομένη, ἣ ὅταν γένηται, ἀεὶ ἀποτρέπει με τοῦτο ὃ ἂν μέλλω πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὔποτε. Übers. E. Heitsch.

22 Pl., *Thg.*, 129e1–3: ταῦτα δὴ πάντα εἴρηκά σοι, ὅτι ἡ δύναμις αὕτη τοῦ δαιμονίου τούτου καὶ εἰς τὰς συνουσίας τῶν μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ συνδιατριβόντων τὸ ἅπαν δύναται. Übers. K. Döring.

23 Vgl. Joyal 2000: 81.

24 Vgl. ebd.: 100.

25 Es ist zwar wahr, dass auch Platon manchmal die literarische Form der Anekdote anwendet, allerdings, wie Aronadio bemerkt, im Falle von *Theages*: “la narrazione assume toni marcatamente agiografici e popolareschi,” welche dem Stil von Platon fremd sind (Vgl. Aronadio 2008: 45).

Diesbezüglich sagt Joyal: "This representation is conveyed, moreover, mainly through a literary medium – the anecdote – which is particularly well suited to express the essentially popular viewpoint which is established in these stories."[26]

Die anderen platonischen Dialoge, auf welche sich der Autor des *Theages* für die Abfassung seines Werkes bezieht, sind der *Theaitetos* und das *Symposion*; es wäre nämlich merkwürdig, wenn ein Autor, der dazu neigt, das δαιμόνιον zu einem δαίμων zu verwandeln, den Dialog außer Acht gelassen hätte, in dem Platon von Eros als δαίμων μέγας spricht.[27]

Das göttliche Zeichen im *Theages* ist hier also nicht mehr das eher unbestimmte τὸ δαιμόνιον, von dem Platon spricht, sondern hat sich tatsächlich, wenn auch nicht namentlich, in einen δαίμων verwandelt, der dem griechischen Glauben eigen ist,[28] weshalb es Schleiermacher auch als "einen kleinen Dämon"[29] bezeichnet.

III

Im zweiten Teil behandelt der Autor die große Macht des göttlichen Zeichens innerhalb des Kontaktes zwischen Sokrates und seinen Gefährten. Das Zeichen:

1. widersetzt sich denjenigen Personen, für die ein Kontakt mit dem Philosophen unfruchtbar wäre (129e3–5);[30]
2. widersetzt sich anderen nicht, auch wenn sich die Nähe des Sokrates ebenso als unnütz erweist (129e5–7);[31]
3. unterstützt bei manchen Personen die Beziehung zu Sokrates. Diese Personen machen infolgedessen in kürzester Zeit enorme Fortschritte

26 Joyal 2000: 81–82.

27 Nach Centrone habe sich der Autor des *Theages* von der Stelle des platonischen *Staats* anregen lassen, in der der Philosoph ausdrücklich auf Theages anspielt (496b7–c3). Hier lässt Platon Sokrates erzählen, dass Theages sich der Philosophie gewidmet hatte, nur weil seine Krankheit ihm nicht gestattet hatte, sich der Politik zu widmen. Gleich danach wird das δαιμόνιον des Sokrates erwähnt (τὸ δ' ἡμέτερον οὐκ ἄξιον λέγειν, τὸ δαιμόνιον σημεῖον· ἢ γάρ πού τινι ἄλλῳ ἢ οὐδενὶ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν γέγονεν: Pl., *Resp.*, 496c3–5) und dies hat möglicherweise dem Autor des *Theages* den Anstoß für seine persönliche Darstellung des dämonischen Zeichen gegeben. Vgl. Centrone 1997: 23.

28 Vgl. Joyal 2000: 99.

29 F. Schleiermacher 1809: 249.

30 πολλοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἐναντιοῦται, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι τούτοις ὠφεληθῆναι μετ' ἐμοῦ διατρίβουσιν, ὥστε οὐχ οἷόν τέ μοι τούτοις συνδιατρίβειν.

31 πολλοῖς δὲ συνεῖναι μὲν οὐ διακωλύει, ὠφελοῦνται δὲ οὐδὲν συνόντες.

(129e7–9),[32] auch wenn sie nicht die gleichen Vorteile aus dem Beisammensein mit Sokrates ziehen:

a) Nur Manche ziehen aus seiner Nähe einen sicheren und dauerhaften Vorteil (129e9–130a2),[33]
b) während Andere ihr ganzes erworbenes Wissen verlieren, wenn sie sich von Sokrates zu schnell trennen (130a2–4).[34]

Der Unterschied zwischen dem ersten und dem zweiten Abschnitt dieses Teiles ist so offenbar, dass man vermuten könnte, der Autor dieses Dialogs habe auf verschiedene Quellen oder auf eine einzige heterogene Quelle zurückgegriffen.[35]

In diesem Teil wird nicht mehr von denjenigen gesprochen, die negative Folgen zu erleiden zu hatten, weil sie nicht auf das δαιμόνιον hörten, sondern es wird der große Einfluss des dämonischen Zeichens auf die Beziehung zwischen Sokrates und seinen Freunden unterstrichen.

Im Gegensatz zu den Aussagen in Platons Schriften – und auch zu denen des *Theages* selbst, die am Anfang dieses Dialoges stehen,[36] – hat das göttliche Zeichen im *Theages* ganz deutlich eine aktive Rolle. Das kann man daraus ersehen, dass der Autor den Begriff δύναμις mit dem Dämon in Verbindung bringt (οἷς δ᾽ ἂν συλλάβηται τῆς συνουσίας ἡ τοῦ δαιμονίου δύναμις, οὗτοί εἰσιν ὧν καὶ σὺ ᾔσθησαι: 129e1–2),[37] und dass er zum Ausdruck bringt, es ermutige Sokrates dazu (συλλάβηται τῆς συνουσίας: 129e7), sich bestimmten Personen anzunähern.[38]

32 οἷς δ᾽ ἂν συλλάβηται τῆς συνουσίας ἡ τοῦ δαιμονίου **δύναμις**, οὗτοί εἰσιν ὧν καὶ σὺ ᾔσθησαι· ταχὺ γὰρ παραχρῆμα ἐπιδιδόασιν.

33 καὶ τούτων αὖ τῶν ἐπιδιδόντων οἱ μὲν καὶ βέβαιον ἔχουσι καὶ παραμόνιμον τὴν ὠφελίαν.

34 πολλοὶ δέ, ὅσον ἂν μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ χρόνον ὦσιν, θαυμάσιον ἐπιδιδόασιν, ἐπειδὰν δέ μου ἀπόσχωνται, πάλιν οὐδὲν διαφέρουσιν ὁτουοῦν.

35 Vgl. Joyal 2000: 82.

36 Pl., *Thg.*, 128d2–5.

37 Bruno Centrone bemerkt die offenkundige Mehrdeutigkeit dieses Satzes in den verschiedenen Übersetzungen (Vgl. Centrone 1997: 338). Thomas Pangle übersetzt ihn folgendermaßen: “Those whose intercouse the power of the demonic thing contributes,” Piero Pucci schägt vor: “Coloro che la potenza demonica aiuta nello stare con me,” und Walter Lamb: “Those who are assisted in their intercourse by that spiritual power.”

38 Das erinnert an die Stelle des *Alkibiades I*, in der Sokrates erklärt, dass ein dämonisches Abhalten (τι δαιμόνιον ἐναντίωμα: 103a5–6) zu wirken aufgehört habe und ihm somit erlaubt habe, sich dem jungen Alkibiades zu nähern, erst als er seine alten Freunden zurückgelassen und sich höheren Zielen gewidmet habe. Doch im Gegensatz zum *Theages*, wo es scheint, dass das δαιμόνιον Sokrates aktiv *aufmuntert*, beschränkt es sich im *Alkibiades I* darauf, den Kontakt zwischen letzterem und dem jungen Mann zu verhindern.

Sokrates selbst hat allerdings im *Theages* keine aktive Rolle beim Lernprozess eines Gefährten, und wenn einer zustande kommt, ist das nur der Intervention des Dämons geschuldet, der ihm zur rechten Zeit erlaubt, mit Sokrates in Kontakt zu treten.[39]

Eine solche Aussage erinnert an eine mäeutische Stelle im *Theaitetos* (150c8–151a1):

a) 150c8–e1: εἰμὶ δὴ οὖν αὐτὸς μὲν οὐ πάνυ τι σοφός, οὐδέ τί μοι ἔστιν εὕρημα τοιοῦτον γεγονὸς τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς ἔκγονον· οἱ δ᾽ ἐμοὶ συγγιγνόμενοι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον φαίνονται ἔνιοι μὲν καὶ πάνυ ἀμαθεῖς, πάντες δὲ προϊούσης τῆς συνουσίας, **οἷσπερ ἂν ὁ θεὸς παρείκῃ**, θαυμαστὸν ὅσον ἐπιδιδόντες, ὡς αὑτοῖς τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις δοκοῦσι· καὶ τοῦτο ἐναργὲς ὅτι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ οὐδὲν πώποτε μαθόντες, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτοὶ παρ᾽ αὑτῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ εὑρόντες μαθόντες, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτοὶ παρ᾽ αὑτῶν πολλὰ καὶ καλὰ εὑρόντες τε καὶ τεκόντες. τῆς μέντοι μαιείας **ὁ θεός τε καὶ ἐγὼ αἴτιος.**[40]

b) 150e1–151a1: ὧδε δὲ δῆλον· πολλοὶ ἤδη τοῦτο ἀγνοήσαντες καὶ ἑαυτοὺς αἰτιασάμενοι, ἐμοῦ δὲ καταφρονήσαντες, ἢ αὐτοὶ ἢ ὑπ᾽ ἄλλων πεισθέντες ἀπῆλθον πρῳαίτερον τοῦ δέοντος, ἀπελθόντες δὲ τά τε λοιπὰ ἐξήμβλωσαν διὰ πονηρὰν συνουσίαν καὶ τὰ ὑπ᾽ ἐμοῦ μαιευθέντα κακῶς τρέφοντες ἀπώλεσαν, ψευδῆ καὶ εἴδωλα περὶ πλείονος ποιησάμενοι τοῦ ἀληθοῦς, τελευτῶντες δ᾽ αὑτοῖς τε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔδοξαν ἀμαθεῖς εἶναι […].οὕς, ὅταν πάλιν ἔλθωσι δεόμενοι τῆς ἐμῆς συνουσίας καὶ θαυμαστὰ δρῶντες, **ἐνίοις μὲν τὸ γιγνόμενόν μοι δαιμόνιον ἀποκωλύει συνεῖναι,** ἐνίοις δὲ ἐᾷ, καὶ πάλιν οὗτοι ἐπιδιδόασι.[41]

39 Das erinnert an die Stelle im *Alcibiades maior*, in dem Sokrates erklärt, ein dämonisches Hindernis (τι δαιμόνιον ἐναντίωμα: 103a5–6) habe ihm erst dann erlaubt, sich dem jungen Alkibiades anzunähern, wenn dieser sich von seinen alten Freunden getrennt und sich höheren Zielen gewidmet hätte. In der Tat hat ihn das göttliche Zeichen dann nicht mehr gehindert (νῦν δὲ ἐπειδὴ οὐκέτι ἐναντιοῦται, οὕτω προσελήλυθα: 103a6–b1) und Sokrates gibt seiner Hoffnung Ausdruck, es werde ihn auch in Zukunft nicht mehr im Wege stehen (εὔελπις δ᾽εἰμὶ καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν μὴ ἐναντιώσεσθαι αὐτό: 103b1–2). Doch im Gegensatz zum δαιμόνιον des *Theages*, das Sokrates aktiv zu *ermutigen* scheint, beschränkt es sich im *Alcibiades* darauf, den Kontakt zwischen beiden zu *verhindern*.

40 "Daher bin ich selbst keineswegs etwa weise, habe auch nichts dergleichen aufzuzeigen als Ausgeburt meiner eigenen Seele. Die aber mit mir umgehen, zeigen sich zuerst zwar zum Teil gar sehr ungelehrig; hernach aber bei fortgesetztem Umgange alle denen es der Gott vergönnt wunderbar schnell fortschreitend, wie es ihnen selbst und anderen scheint; und dies offenbar ohne jemals irgend etwas etwa von mir gelernt zu haben, sondern nur selbst aus sich selbst entdecken sie viel Schönes und halten es fest; die Geburtshilfe indes leisten dabei der Gott und ich." Übers. F. Schleiermacher (Bearb. P. Staudacher).

41 "Dies erhellt hieraus. Viele schon haben dies verkennend und sich selbst alles zuschreibend, mich aber verachtend, oder auch selbst von anderen überredet, sich früher, als recht war, von mir getrennt, und nach dieser Trennung dann, teils infolge schlechter Gesellschaft, nur Fehlgeburten getan, teils auch das, wovon sie durch mich entbunden

Bei einer eingehenderen Lektüre wird man allerdings feststellen, dass die beiden Passagen entscheidend von der Aussage des *Theages* abweichen. Besonders der Ausgangspunkt ist unterschiedlich: Im *Theaitetos* ist der mäeutische Auftrag vom Gott befohlen, der ihn dazu verpflichtet, der "Geburtshelfer des Wissens" zu werden, indem er das verborgene Wissen seiner Gesprächspartner ans Licht bringt, auch wenn er selbst aktiv keine Unterweisungen geben kann, weil er nicht in der Lage ist, Weisheit zu gebären. So lässt Platon ihn auch sagen: "Ja auch hierin geht es mir eben wie den Hebammen, ich gebäre nichts von Weisheit, und was mir bereits viele vorgeworfen, daß ich andere zwar fragte, selbst aber nichts über irgend etwas antwortete, weil ich nämlich nichts Kluges wüßte zu antworten, darin haben sie recht."[42]

Ein weiterer Punkt ist folgender: Wenn vom "sokratischen Auftrag" die Rede ist, bezieht sich Platon nicht auf das δαιμόνιον. Wenn Sokrates von dem Gott spricht, nennt er ihn ὁ θεὸς – vielleicht bezieht er sich damit auf Apoll, der in der *Apologie* Sokrates dazu bringt, das Wissen der Menschen auf die Probe zu stellen.[43]

Der Autor des *Theages* dagegen bleibt unbestimmt in Bezug auf den Ursprung des "sokratischen Auftrags," und Sokrates selbst hat keine aktive Rolle

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worden, durch Verwahrlosung wieder verloren, weil sie die mißgestalteten und unechten Geburten höher achteten als die rechten; zuletzt aber sind sie sich selbst und anderen gar unverständig vorgekommen […]. Wenn solche dann wiederkommen, meines Umgangs begehrend, und wunder was darum tun, hindert mich doch das Göttliche, was mir zu widerfahren pflegt, mit einigen wieder umzugehen; anderen dagegen wird es vergönnt, und diese nehmen sich wieder auf." Übers. F. Schleiermacher (Bearb. P. Staudacher).

42 *Theaet.*, 150c3–7: ἐπεὶ τόδε γε καὶ ἐμοὶ ὑπάρχει ὅπερ ταῖς μαίαις· ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας, καὶ ὅπερ ἤδη πολλοί μοι ὠνείδισαν, ὡς τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους ἐρωτῶ, αὐτὸς δὲ οὐδὲν ἀποφαίνομαι περὶ οὐδενὸς διὰ τὸ μηδὲν ἔχειν σοφόν, ἀληθὲς ὀνειδίζουσιν. Übers. F. Schleiermacher (Bearb. P. Staudacher).

43 Der Bezug auf Apoll in der *Apologie* durch den Begriff ὁ θεὸς erscheint auch bei folgenden anderen Passagen: Pl., *Apol.*, 23c1: ἀλλ' ἐν πενίᾳ μυρίᾳ εἰμὶ διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ λατρείαν ("Ich bin in äußerster Armut wegen des Dienstes für den Gott"); 28d10–29a1: ἐγὼ οὖν δεινὰ ἂν εἴην εἰργασμένος, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, εἰ ὅτε μέν με οἱ ἄρχοντες ἔταττον, οὓς ὑμεῖς εἵλεσθε ἄρχειν μου, καὶ ἐν Ποτειδαίᾳ καὶ ἐν Ἀμφιπόλει καὶ ἐπὶ Δηλίῳ, τότε μὲν οὗ ἐκεῖνοι ἔταττον ἔμενον ὥσπερ καὶ ἄλλος τις καὶ ἐκινδύνευον ἀποθανεῖν, τοῦ δὲ θεοῦ τάττοντος, ὡς ἐγὼ ᾠήθην τε καὶ ὑπέλαβον, φιλοσοφοῦντά με δεῖν ζῆν καὶ ἐξετάζοντα ἐμαυτὸν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, ἐνταῦθα δὲ φοβηθεὶς ἢ θάνατον ἢ ἄλλ' ὁτιοῦν πρᾶγμα λίποιμι τὴν τάξιν ("Und ich hätte ja wohl absurd gehandelt, ihr Männer von Athen, wenn ich damals, als die Befehlshaber, die ihr mir zu Vorgesetzten gewählt hattet, mir meinen Posten anwiesen, nämlich vor Potidea, bei Amphipolis und am Delion, wenn ich damals, wo sie mich hinstellten, ausharrte so gut wie jeder andere und zu sterben bereit war, da aber, wie ich überzeugt bin, Gott mir gebietet mein Leben zu führen im Streben nach Erkenntnis und prüfend mich selbst und die anderen, wenn ich da aus Furcht vor dem Tod oder sonst einer Sache meinen Platz"); 29d2–7: Ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀσπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φιλῶ, πείσομαι

beim Wissenserwerb seiner Gesprächspartner. Er ist lediglich der Macht seines δαιμόνιον anvertraut, das bestimmt, wer in welchem Maße auf dem Weg zum Wissen voranschreitet.

Während Platon außerdem deutlich die beiden Begriffe δαιμόνιον und θεὸς voneinander abgrenzt und ihnen unterschiedliche Funktionen zuteilt, benutzt sie der Autor des *Theages* fast gleichbedeutend.

Um diese Thesen zu veranschaulichen, ist es sinnvoll, die mäeutische Passage im *Theaitetos* in zwei Teile zu gliedern:

1. Der erste (150d2–e1) handelt von den Personen, die Sokrates nahe stehen, und von ihren großen Fortschritten auf dem Weg zur Weisheit. Hier ist nicht vom δαιμόνιον die Rede, und der Erfolg des Erlangens der Erkenntnis hängt von der mäeutischen Funktion des Sokrates und von der Tatsache ab, dass der Gott (ὁ θεὸς) diesen Prozess begleitet.
2. Der zweite Teil (150e1–151a5) gibt Aufschluss über die Wirkung des δαιμόνιον in Bezug auf diejenigen, die sich allzu bald von Sokrates getrennt haben und sich ihm daraufhin wieder annähern wollen. In diesem Zusammenhang führt Platon den Begriff τὸ δαιμόνιον ein und schreibt, dass es Sokrates davon abhält, sich bestimmten Personen anzunähern, während es ihm den Umgang mit anderen gewährt.

Wenn Platon τὸ δαιμόνιον einführt, benutzt er Formulierungen, die vermuten lassen, dass es sich dabei um ein neues Element handelt. Dieses hat, wie immer bei Platon, eine apotreptische Funktion, während ὁ θεὸς hier eine aktivere Rolle zu haben scheint.[44] Es sieht so aus, als ob dieser herbeigezogen wird, um zu zeigen, dass Sokrates an und für sich nichts weiß, aber dazu fähig ist, bei anderen geistig trächtigen Menschen mithilfe der Wirkung des θεὸς, die mit der mäeutischen Methode verbunden ist, ihre verborgene Weisheit zum Vorschein kommen zu lassen (Pl., *Theaet.*, 150d8–e1: τῆς μέντοι μαιείας ὁ θεός τε καὶ ἐγὼ αἴτιος).

Der Autor des *Theages* dagegen hat beide Ebenen miteinander vereint, entweder um die Rolle des δαιμόνιον im Umgang von Sokrates mit anderen

δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν, καὶ ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐμπνέω καὶ οἷός τε ὦ, οὐ μὴ παύσωμαι φιλοσοφῶν καὶ ὑμῖν παρακελευόμενός τε καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενος ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν, λέγων οἷάπερ εἴωθα („Ich habe euch gern, ihr Männer von Athen, und ich liebe euch, doch gehorchen werde ich dem Gott mehr als euch, und solange ich atme und in der Lage bin, werde ich nicht aufhören, nach Erkenntnis zu streben und euch zu ermuntern und jedem von euch, auf wen ich auch treffe, den Weg zu weisen mit Worten, wie ich sie gewohnt bin"); 30a5–7: ταῦτα γὰρ κελεύει ὁ θεός, εὖ ἴστε, καὶ ἐγὼ οἴομαι οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μεῖζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει ἢ τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν („Denn das gebietet der Gott, dessen seid gewiß, und ich glaube, dass euch in der Stadt noch nie ein größeres Gut zuteil geworden ist als dieser mein dem Gott gewidmete Dienst").

44 Vgl. Joyal 2000: 84.

Personen hervorzuheben, oder weil er den fundamentalen Unterschied zwischen ὁ θεὸς und τὸ δαιμόνιον bei Platon nicht richtig verstanden hat und somit das platonische Konzept entstellt hat.[45] In 129e1–2 lässt er Sokrates sagen: ταῦτα δὴ πάντα εἴρηκά σοι, ὅτι ἡ **δύναμις** αὕτη τοῦ δαιμονίου τούτου καὶ εἰς τὰς συνουσίας τῶν μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ συνδιατριβόντων τὸ ἅπαν δύναται. Der Begriff δύναμις ist in Verbindung mit τὸ δαιμόνιον,[46] worauf bereits hingewiesen wurde, im *corpus platonicum* nicht vorhanden, denn er weist auf eine Aktivität hin, während bei Platon das δαιμόνιον immer zurückhaltend ist – eine Bremse und nicht ein Ansporn zum Handeln. Auch wenn der Autor des *Theages* das Zeichen des Sokrates nicht ausdrücklich δαίμων nennt, geht die von Platon angewandte Unterscheidung zwischen τὸ δαιμόνιον und den δαίμονες hier verloren.

IV

Sowohl Platon als auch der Autor des *Theages* versuchen die Frage nach dem Erkenntnisgewinn und nach Sokrates' Funktion bei diesem Prozess zu beantworten. Es ist eine schwierige Aufgabe, eine Lösung auf die Frage nach Sokrates' erzieherischer Wirkung und nach der Übermittlung von Wissen zu finden, weil eines der Merkmale des Philosophen ist, niemals etwas direkt gelehrt zu haben – im Gegensatz zu den Sophisten. Dennoch hat das sokratische Wirken nicht nur in der *pars destruens* bestehen können, oder in der Zerstörung scheinbaren Wissens, denn es war auch eine *pars construens* notwendig. Platon löst dieses Problem mit der Einführung des mäeutischen Vorgehens, während der Autor des *Theages* es mit der Erkenntnis durch physischen Kontakt löst.[47]

In beiden Dialogen ist das Geschehen mit Aristeides paradigmatisch, der während der ganzen Zeit, in der er mit Sokrates in Kontakt steht, gewaltige Fortschritte macht (Pl., *Theag*., 130a5–6). Aber eines Tages muss er ihn verlassen und verliert somit seine gesamten dialektischen und philosophischen Fähigkeiten (Pl., *Theag.*, 130c1–8). Doch der Grund, aus dem er Sokrates verlässt, ist in beiden Dialogen verschieden. Im *Theaitetos* verlässt er ihn, weil er nun eine

45 Vgl. ebd.: 88.

46 Für eine Vertiefung des Themas der Beziehung zwischen dem sokratischen δαιμόνιον und der δύναμις im *Theages* siehe: Mineo 2008: 10–14.

47 Reale behauptet, dass schon im *Theages* die Mäeutik im Ansatz schon anwesend sei, auch wenn dieser Begriff nicht ausdrücklich erwähnt oder ausformuliert wird (2015: 65). Allerdings scheint diese Interpretation zu gezwungen, was man anhand eines Vergleichs dieses Dialoges mit dem platonischen *Theaitetos* erkennen kann. Im *Theages* gibt es tatsächlich keinen Bezug auf die mäeutische Kunst des Sokrates, wie auch Centrone behauptet (2012: 26, 65).

hohe Meinung von sich gewonnen und begonnen hat, mehr auf Lügen und Trugbilder als auf die Wahrheit zu setzen (150e6–7), während es im *Theages* äußere Gründe sind: Er muss an einem Feldzug teilnehmen.

Im *Theages* wird folgende Situation geschildert: Als Sokrates den jungen Mann fragt, wie er es geschafft habe, einen so hohen Kenntnisstand zu erreichen, und warum er das erlangte Wissen anschließend verloren habe, gibt Aristeides zu, nichts von ihm direkt gelernt (130d4–5), sondern nur aufgrund seiner Nähe Fortschritte gemacht zu haben, sogar wenn er sich nur im selben Haus und noch nicht einmal im selben Raum mit ihm aufgehalten habe (130d5–6). Doch größere Fortschritte habe er gemacht, wenn sie im selben Raum waren, Sokrates sprach und Aristeides ihn währenddessen direkt anblickte (130d6–e1); die größten Fortschritte habe er allerdings immer dann gemacht, wenn er neben ihm saß und Sokrates ihn berührte (130e1–3).

Die Figur des Sokrates scheint im *Theages* also einen magisch-wundertätigen Charakter anzunehmen. Obwohl er nichts direkt lehrt, kann er Wissen lediglich durch Nähe und Berührung auf seine Freunde übertragen. Diese Art von Wissenserwerb "durch Kontakt" erinnert scheinbar an eine Stelle aus Platons *Symposion*, in der Agathon Sokrates bittet, sich neben ihn zu setzen, so dass er durch seine Berührung an seinem Wissen teilhaben könne.[48] Doch im *Symposion* spricht Agathon, und nicht Sokrates, diesen Gedanken aus, woraufhin der letztere ihm in ironischem Ton antwortet: "Das wäre schön, Agathon, wenn die Weisheit so beschaffen wäre, daß sie aus dem Volleren von uns in den Leereren flösse, wenn wir einander berühren, so wie bei den Bechern mittels eines Wollfadens das Wasser aus dem volleren in den leereren herüberfließt."[49]

V

Anhand dieser Analyse lassen sich nun einige Schlussfolgerungen über das erzieherische Wirken des Sokrates in den beiden Dialogen ziehen.

48 Pl., *Symp.*, 175c6–d1: τὸν οὖν Ἀγάθωνα – τυγχάνειν γὰρ ἔσχατον κατακείμενον μόνον – Δεῦρ', ἔφη φάναι, Σώκρατες, παρ' ἐμὲ κατάκεισο, ἵνα καὶ τοῦ σοφοῦ ἁπτόμενός σου ἀπολαύσω, ὅ σοι προσέστη ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ("Agathon denn es habe sich so ergeben, daß er am unteren Ende alleine lag – habe ihm zugerufen: Hierher Sokrates, leg dich neben mich, damit mir durch deine Berührung von der Weisheit zuteil werde, die du dort vor der Tür gewonnen hast. Denn offenbar hast du das Gesuchte gefunden und hast es nun; Eher wärst du gewiß nicht fortgegangen." Übers. B. Zehnpfennig).

49 Pl., *Symp.*, 175d3–e1: Εὖ ἂν ἔχοι, ὦ Ἀγάθων, εἰ τοιοῦτον εἴη ἡ σοφία ὥστ' ἐκ τοῦ πληρεστέρου εἰς τὸ κενώτερον ῥεῖν ἡμῶν, ἐὰν ἁπτώμεθα ἀλλήλων, ὥσπερ τὸ ἐν ταῖς κύλιξιν ὕδωρ τὸ διὰ τοῦ ἐρίου ῥέον ἐκ τῆς πληρεστέρας εἰς τὴν κενωτέραν. Übers. B. Zehnpfennig.

In beiden Fällen ist das Ziel das Erlangen von Weisheit (σοφία), doch während der Autor des *Theages* keine genauen Aussagen darüber trifft, welche Funktion Sokrates im Prozess des Wissenserwerbes seiner Gesprächspartner hat, und wohl auch absichtlich bezüglich dieser Frage vage bleibt, um sich eher auf die Beschreibung des Wirkens des δαιμόνιον zu konzentrieren, wird Sokrates' Wirkungsweise im *Theaitetos* genau beschrieben: Der Auftrag, den Sokrates vom Gott (ὁ θεὸς) erhalten hat, besteht darin, Geburtshelfer zu sein, beziehungsweise aus den Seelen der Menschen ihre latent vorhandene Weisheit hervorzurufen – unter der Bedingung, dass der Gott (θεὸς) ihm das erlaubt (150d4).

Sokrates' Rolle im *Theaitetos* ist also *aktiv*, da er trotz seines rigorosen Bekenntnisses der eigenen Unfähigkeit, Wissen zu gebären, und trotz der Unwissenheit (a) *erkennt*, wenn jemand Erkenntnismöglichkeiten in sich trägt, (b) seinem Gesprächspartner dabei *hilft*, sein latentes Wissen in aktives zu verwandeln, und (c) *unterscheidet*, ob das Wissen, das die Seele eines jungen Mannes zum Vorschein bringt, ein wahres oder scheinbares ist.[50] Und so sagt er: "Das größte aber an unserer Kunst ist dieses, daß sie imstande ist zu prüfen, ob die Seele des Jünglings Mißgestaltetes und Falsches zu gebären im Begriff ist; oder Gebildetes und Echtes."[51]

In diesem Dialog zeigt sich das δαιμόνιον erst später: Es zeigt sich, wenn diejenigen jungen Männern versuchen, sich erneut an Sokrates anzunähern, die zuvor als geistig trächtig erkannt wurden und mit denen Sokrates ein dialektische Gespräch begonnen hatte, um ihr Wissen zum Vorschein zu bringen, die sich dann aber zu früh von ihm getrennt haben.

Im *Theages* ist die Rolle des Sokrates dagegen eher *passiv*. Hier entscheidet sein δαιμόνιον, wer mithilfe des Philosophen intellektuelle Fortschritte machen darf, und auch was die Übertragung des Wissens "durch Kontakt" betrifft, erklärt der Autor nicht, auf welche Weise das geschieht und was genau Sokrates' Beitrag dazu ist. Diese Theorie wird sogar von Aristeides und nicht von Sokrates selbst beschrieben, weshalb man vermuten kann, dass der Autor kein klares Urteil darüber fällen will. Doch könnte man wie Friedländer und Cobb einwenden, dass der Autor des *Theages* Sokrates nicht zu einem Wundertäter machen, sondern seine Rolle als Erzieher hervorheben wollte; denn man könnte behaupten, dass sich die Fortschritte, die Aristeides im Kontakt

50 Döring 2004: 65.

51 Pl., *Theaet.*, 150c1–4: μέγιστον δὲ τοῦτ' ἔνι τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ τέχνῃ, βασανίζειν δυνατὸν εἶναι παντὶ τρόπῳ πότερον εἴδωλον καὶ ψεῦδος ἀποτίκτει τοῦ νέου ἡ διάνοια ἢ γόνιμόν τε καὶ ἀληθές. Übers. F. Schleiermacher (Bearb. P. Staudacher).

mit Sokrates macht, nicht an einen “magischen” Charakter seiner Anwesenheit gebunden sind, sondern an ein aufmerksames Zuhören seiner Reden.[52]

Doch kann man an dieser Interpretation einiges kritisieren. Man kann nicht sagen, dass die Fortschritte von Sokrates' Freunden die Früchte der Unterweisungen und der Reden sind, die er erteilte und denen die Freunde zuhörten, denn Aristeides erklärt, auch dann Fortschritte gemacht zu haben, wenn er sich mit Sokrates auch nur in einem Haus zusammen aufhielt (130d5–6). Also kann der Einfluss des Sokrates auf seine Schüler nicht nur an den Zauber des großen Erziehers gebunden sein.[53] Rational ist der Einfluss nicht zu verstehen, und er zeigt sich auch dann, wenn sich seine Schüler nicht in unmittelbarer Nähe zum Philosophen aufhalten.

Abschließend kann man sagen, dass sich die unterschiedliche Rolle des Sokrates und seines δαιμόνιον im *Theaitetos* und im *Theages* auch klar in den Schlussfolgerungen zeigt, zu denen der Philosoph bezüglich der Zukunft seiner zwei jungen Gesprächspartner gelangt: Auch wenn Theaitetos es im Laufe dieses Gespräches nicht schafft, sein latentes Wissen hervorzubringen, wird er doch eines Tages dank der mäeutischen Kunst des Sokrates wahrscheinlich in der Lage sein, die Früchte seines verborgenen Wissens zum Vorschein kommen zu lassen, oder er wird mit einer bescheidenen Geisteshaltung erkennen können, wenn er sich in einem Zustand intellektueller Unfruchtbarkeit befinden wird.[54] Im Gegensatz dazu trifft Sokrates im *Theages* weder genaue noch optimistische Aussagen über die Zukunft seiner Gesprächspartner. Er selbst weiß nicht, ob der junge Mann durch seinen Kontakt und seine Nähe Fortschritte machen wird oder nicht. am Ende des Dialoges schlägt Theages vor, das göttliche Zeichen auf die Probe zu stellen, indem sie beginnen zusammen zu sein (131a1–3), und, falls dieses sich ihrer Annäherung in den Weg stellen sollte, einen anderen Lehrer zu finden oder zu versuchen, das göttliche Zeichen mit Gebeten, Opfern und anderen Mitteln (131a5–7) zu besänftigen. Auch daraus kann man die positiv-aktive Rolle des platonischen Sokrates im Gegensatz zum eher passiven im *Theages* ableiten, der dort in einem magisch-wundertätigen Licht dargestellt wird; eine solche Schilderung ist wichtig, weil

52 Vgl. Friedländer 1930: 139–140; Cobb 1992: 283.

53 Friedländer 1964: 52–53.

54 Pl., *Theaet.*, 210c1–4: “Gedenkst du nun, Theaitetos, nach diesem wiederum mir anderem schwanger zu werden, so wirst du, wenn du es wirst, dann Besseres bei dir tragen vermöge der gegenwärtigen Prüfung, wenn du aber leer bleibst, denen, welche dich umgeben, weniger beschwerlich sein und sanftmütiger, und besonnenerweise nicht glauben zu wissen, was du nicht weißt.” Übers. F. Schleiermacher (Bearb. P. Staudacher). Vgl. Sedley 2004: 35–36.

sie die Grundlage darstellt, aus der die Denker der hellenistischen Zeit schöpfen werden, um jene eigentümliche ἀποθείωσις der Figur des Sokrates zu entwickeln, die sich von diesem Zeitpunkt an profilieren wird.

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CHAPTER 8

The *Theaetetus* Digression: an Ethical Interlude in an Epistemological Dialogue?

Emanuele Maffi

Abstract

The so-called Digression (172a1–177c4) is probably the least discussed part of the *Theaetetus*, perhaps because it is not easy to get the point of this part of the dialogue. In this paper my purpose is to give a plausible answer to the following questions: what is the role played by the Digression within the dialogue as a whole? And could we consider it merely an ethical interlude in an epistemological context?

From the point of view of content, the Digression doesn't introduce anything new, beyond what Plato said in his middle dialogues. All the ideas the Digression points out have already been explained elsewhere: (1) the freedom of the philosopher, as opposed to the slavery of the orator, is a topic of the *Gorgias*; (2) the philosopher's care for the soul rather than the body and the thesis that there is no virtue without wisdom are claimed in the *Phaedo* as well in the *Republic*; (3) that this wisdom is the knowledge of Forms and that it is a kind of purification and assimilation to god as far as possible is argued in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*. What conclusion can be drawn from that?

The only conclusion we may draw is that the importance of the Digression consists exactly in the fact that it does not add anything new to Plato's philosophy and in this way it actually shows that the onto-epistemological background of the *Theaetetus* is the same background in play in the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Through the Digression, Plato warns us that the metaphysical and epistemological framework which we must use to make sense of the *Theaetetus* is still that of the middle dialogues, for the very good reason that every topic Plato accounts for in the Digression has already been explained in a more detailed way in his previous works. I think that, if rightly understood, the Digression states explicitly that the horizon of the middle dialogues is still in place and therefore that the Two-World Theory is still alive. If I am right, the Digression is not a mere ethical interlude, barely integrated to the rest of dialogue. Rather it plays a central role in marking the continuity between the *Theaetetus* and Plato's middle dialogues. This continuity makes the *Theaetetus* not an indirect confirmation of Plato epistemology but a pivotal work in understanding the best human knowledge

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(*alethes doxa meta logou*) as philo-sophia and, consequently, the true goal of Plato's epistemology.

1 Introduction

"It would be hard to think of a passage that is at the same time as widely admired and as infrequently discussed as the self-declared Digression (172a1–177c4) that stands at the heart of the *Theaetetus*."[1] With this statement David Sedley opens his analysis of this part of the dialogue. It is true that no other part of the dialogue has been so underestimated by contemporary readers. Compared to all the others passages of the dialogue, the Digression is really the least discussed part of the *Theatetus*.[2] Why? Probably because it is difficult to get the point of this part of the dialogue. Therefore, the task I will fulfill in this paper is to give a plausible answer to the following questions: *what is the role played by the Digression within the dialogue as a whole?* And *could we consider it merely an ethical interlude in an epistemological context?* Before answering these questions, I shall examine some of the most detailed interpretations of this part of the dialogue.

2 Some Readings of the Digression

On the one hand, some commentators see *no* substantial point to the Digression. For example, Ryle writes that it is "philosophically quite pointless."[3] Likewise, McDowell argues that the Digression is tangential to the main purposes of the *Theaetetus*. As a matter of fact, he suggests that although the Digression is "on the face of it quite irrelevant to the dialogue," it serves "a purpose which, in a modern book, might be served by footnotes or an appendix."[4] On the other hand, some others try to integrate the Digression into the dialogue as a whole. I shall consider the main attempts at this second kind of reading.

1 Sedley 2004: 62.

2 This does not mean that this famous passage of the dialogue has not been studied at all. But if we consider that fact that *Theatetus* is an 'over studied' dialogue, the Digression is really the most 'under studied' part of the dialogue. Among the most recent studies on this topic, I would mention here Rue 1993, Bradshaw 1998, Spinelli 2002, Giannopolou 2002 and Ibáñes-Puig 2007.

3 Ryle 1994: 158.

4 McDowell 1973: 174.

2.1 *Cornford's Reading*

The first attempt is Cornford's. Actually, he makes an interesting suggestion, arguing that through the Digression Plato aims at giving the reader references to anti-relativist arguments that he presents elsewhere.[5] I agree that through the Digression, Plato wants to focus our attention on other central passages in his work, but I do not think that he is mainly concerned with anti-relativist arguments, because elsewhere in the *Theaetetus* Plato uses impressive philosophical instruments to refute Protagoras' thesis. The twenty-eight Stephanus pages devoted to the doctrine of *homo mensura* make the *Theaetetus* Plato's greatest attack against relativism. As a result, briefly, I suggest that Cornford misses the reason in virtue of which Plato intends to focus our attention elsewhere.

2.2 *Burnyeat's Reading*

The second attempt is Burnyeat's. According to him, the Defence of Protagoras supported by Socrates (a defence that Burnyeat calls the "New Formulation") cannot deny the objectivity of the useful (172c-b) but it does leave room for an effective kind of relativism with regard to moral, political, and religious values. It does not take a Protagoras follower to be a relativist about moral values, because since "relativism about values is independently tempting, it needs not to be reached by way of a relativist epistemology."[6] To be a relativist about moral values without being a relativist in epistemology is the key to understand the meaning of the Digression.

As Burnyeat writes:

> the central theme of the Digression is the relation of justice and prudence. If questions of advantage have objective answers but what is just or unjust depends upon and is relative to the fluctuating judgements of community or individual, then it becomes impossible to say that justice is in one's best interests, that a prudent man who wants to lead a happy life will seek to acquire justice and moral virtue generally. There is no firm truth of the form 'Justice is necessary for happiness' if there is no definite and stable answer to the question 'what is justice?' […]. The *Republic* was designed to establish an objectively valid answer to the question 'what is justice?' from which it would emerge as an incontestable truth that justice is a requirement of prudence. The whole grand edifice [of the

5 So Conford 1935: 83: "to argue explicitly against it [relativism] would perhaps take him too far from the original topic of perception. Instead, he inserts [the Digression], which contains allusions to such arguments in other works of his."

6 Burnyeat 1990: 33.

> *Republic*] would collapse if we were to accept the newly formulated separation, with regard to objectivity, between justice and prudence.[7]

In order to reclaim the essential relation between justice and prudence, but in a quick way, Plato interrupts the argument and launches into a rhetorical digression in which he invites us "to contemplate, not rival theories about the relation of justice and prudence, but the lives in which rival theories are put into practice":[8] the life of philosophers, on the one hand, and the life of worldly man of affairs, on the other. What, then, links this interpretation of the Digression with the dialogue as a whole?

> The discussion of what knowledge is is interrupted so that we may be jolted into reflecting for a moment that the question what knowledge is is important because there are certain things it is important to know. The whole course of our life [...] depends upon whether we know or we do not know the right answer to the question about the relation of justice and prudence [...]. To make sure that we do not take the issue lightly, Plato puts the full power of his rhetoric into an extreme expression of his own vision of human life.[9]

Thus, Burnyeat does not deny that the Digression is also a rhetorical passage, but, as has just been pointed out, he thinks that rhetoric in the Digression is a means chosen by Plato to emphasize its central theme. In my opinion, the merit of Burnyeat's perspective on the Digression consists in its capacity to harmonize the Digression with the dialogue as a whole. For, from an epistemological point of view, the *Theaetetus* is for him a long meditation on a brief passage of the *Republic* (477 D-E). The Digression thus becomes an exhortation to meditate on a central theme highlighted in the *Republic*: the relation between justice and prudence.

2.3 *Chappell's Reading*

Chappell builds his reading of the passage along the lines suggested by Burnyeat. According to him, the Digression portrays what it would be like to live in accordance with the two different accounts of knowledge, Protagorean and Platonist, that Plato is comparing. Consistently with Socratic teaching, ethics and knowledge are the two faces of the same coin. In fact, the Digression shows

7 Burnyeat 1990: 33.
8 Burnyeat 1990: 34.
9 Burnyeat 1990: 36.

"what is ethically at stake in the often abstruse epistemological debates"[10] found elsewhere in the dialogue. According to Chappell, the point of the Digression "is that we cannot make a decision about what account of knowledge to accept without making all sorts of other decisions, not only about technical, logical, and metaphysical matters that are to the fore in the rest of the *Theaetetus*, but also about questions of deep ethical significance."[11] Briefly, the message of the Digression seems to be the following: an epistemic model cannot be adopted without adopting the corresponding ethical paradigm at the same time. The choice of a kind of knowledge is not a mere epistemological preference, but always entails an ethical attitude.

Undoubtedly, that is the position supported by Plato, but if Chappel is right, the Digression of the *Theaetetus* does not point out anything beyond what is already known from the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*: the strong relation between ethics and knowledge in Plato's thought. But if that is how the things are, the connection between the Digression and the epistemological aim of the *Theaetetus* does not seem to be underlined enough. Above all, Chappell seems to be leaving this main question unanswered: why, for what epistemological reason, would Plato return once again (through the Digression) to the link between virtue and knowledge already proposed in some of his other works?

2.4 *Sedley's Reading*

According to David Sedley the Digression is one of the most important passages in interpreting the dialogue. Sedley proposes:

> an interpretation of the dialogue according to which Socrates […] although not himself a Platonist, was, so to speak, the midwife of Platonism. By developing this implicit portrayal of Socrates as the midwife of Platonism, Plato aims to demonstrate, if not the identity, at any rate the profound continuity, between, on the one hand, his revered master's historic contribution and, on the other, the Platonist truth.[12]

Consequently, seasoned readers of Plato can see the platonic subtext lying hidden under the Socratic text.[13] Here I shall briefly sketch some stages of this reading of the Digression.

10 Chappell 2004: 127.
11 Chappell 2004: 127.
12 Sedley 2004: 8.
13 In her recent book on *Theaetetus* Giannopolou 2013 accounts for a reading of the Digression close to the Sedley's. From a general point of view she claims that the *Theaetetus* "is a philosophically sophisticated elaboration of the *Apology* that successfully differentiates

(1) By means of the Pindar quotation at 173e3 – the philosopher is he who flies "in the depth of the earth and above the heaven" – Socrates argues that the philosophical type always seeks the broadest possible view of things, "to get his broad perspective, he roams everywhere in thought."[14] But the will of the philosopher to travel to the heaven is not only a Socratic invitation to broaden our perspective but also a vital Platonic means to philosophical enlightenment. As Sedley writes, "the philosopher's flight to the heaven, his act of intellectual self-distancing from civic concerns, is for Plato his transportation from the sensible to the intelligible world, where the truly non-relativized paradigm of justice, and the other Forms, are to be found."[15]

(2) The Socratic invitation to broaden our perspective is the key to understanding why, according to Sedley, the constant Socratic search for universals is an indirect allusion to Form. When Socrates speaks of "justice in itself" or "happiness in general" in the Digression, he is metaphysically innocent. The philosopher of the Digression is portrayed forcing a non-philosopher to confront philosophical questioning – which Socrates says "drags somebody upwards", making use of the language of the simile of the Cave in the *Republic* book 7 – with comic results. Thus, Sedley argues, "dragging the non-philosopher into the realm of universals serves merely to expose his confusion, leaving him a laughing-stock reminiscent of those ill-prepared interlocutors made to look silly by Socratic questioning."[16] This allusion to the effect of his own elenchus may be all that Socrates intends, and there is no reason to think that even the reference to investigating "justice itself and likewise injustice" necessarily

Socrates from the sophists"; but, while "in the *Apology* Socrates defends his philosophical activity partly by distinguishing it from sophistic practices," in the *Theaetetus* "he enacts this distinction" (2). In this general reading of the dialogue, the Digression becomes the manifesto of Socratic midwifery as the only form of similarity to god attainable by the historical Socrates. So Socrates is a 'lesser' philosopher than Plato (who represents the true philosopher): he possesses practical knowledge of virtue but lacks theoretical knowledge of it because he cannot provide definitions of virtues. According to Giannopolou, the Digression thus supports the whole dialogue: "the Socrates of the Digression yearns for wisdom, and his pursuit of the definition of knowledge in the dialogue [even though doomed to failure] manifests his yearning" (101). But if this reading is correct, the *Theaetetus* must be reduced merely to a great tribute to Socrates as the midwife of Platonism. Furthermore, in Giannopolou's proposal, the Digression plays a useless role because it becomes a mere interlude that doesn't add anything new to the dialogue. The Digression represents on a smaller scale what is already at stake in the entire dialogue in full size (namely the Socratic yearning for wisdom). As I hope to demonstrate further, the Digression plays a more important role in the dialogue than the one Giannopolou attributes to it.

14 Sedley 2004: 69.

15 Sedley 2004: 71.

16 Sedley 2004: 73.

implies Platonic metaphysics. Obviously there is an alternative, Platonic way in which these lines can be read: "Prompted by the Cave reminiscence, we may want to take the envisaged inquiry into the nature of kingship, happiness, and 'justice itself' to hint at the *Republic*'s agenda, structured by the transcendent Forms as the objects of the philosopher king's knowledge."[17]

(3) To prefigure the Platonic metaphysical distinction between two worlds, the Socrates of *Theaetetus* distinguishes between a divine and a mortal realm: "and in the divine world, where Plato will in due course place his moral Forms, what Socrates offers in the meantime is god."[18] If the role played by Platonic Forms in other dialogues (for instance Sedley quotes *Republic* 6.500d–e) is to be analysed, it must be acknowledged that the role the Forms play there, as divine objects of imitation, closely matches the role assigned to god in the *Theaeteus* passage. Accordingly, Sedley concludes, "one important merit which Platonic Forms share with Socratic god is clearly their absoluteness."[19] In the same way, the Socratic references to *paradeigmata* at 176e3–177a3 are Plato's way of conveying his acknowledgment:

> that Socrates paved the way for the Platonic metaphysics of moral absolutism, not by anticipating the doctrine of the Forms, but by his characteristic faith in the absolute goodness of god. By doing this, he broke with what Plato saw as the moral relativism of the preceding tradition, and kept open the space that Platonic Forms would later fill.[20]

Sedley's reading surely has the merit of integrating the Digression into the dialogue as a whole, but I hold that the whole interpretation of the dialogue is incorrect, and therefore so too is the reading of the Digression. This is not the right place for a general and critical discussion of the main points of Sedley's interpretation of the *Theaetetus*.[21] Here I shall focus on just one topic. In his analysis of the Digression, Sedley distinguishes Socratic universals from Platonic Forms. The former are at play in the Digression, while the latter can be grasped only indirectly (namely by the external dialectic between text and readers) by seasoned readers of Plato. This distinction is doubtlessly a cornerstone of Sedley's reading of the dialogue. Certainly Sedley considers the same idea valid in one of the most discussed passage of the dialogue, namely the

17 Sedley 2004: 73–74.
18 Sedley 2004: 77.
19 Sedley 2004: 77.
20 Sedley 2004: 79.
21 For a general discussion of Sedley's hermeneutical reading of the *Theaetetus* see Trabattoni 2008: 61–73.

case of the *koinà* (*Tht.* 185c–186a). These are a set of predicates to which the soul has access regardless of the use of our sense-organs. In fact, according to Sedley, they are a priori items or Socratic universals but not yet the Platonic Forms because they are not metaphysically loaded. But a few pages later Sedley cannot hide his amazement that "although his examples were all [...] cases where commons function as predicates of sensible subjects, he [Socrates] persistently describes them, somewhat surprisingly, as cases of the soul considering the commons all by itself (*aute kath'hauten*) – a classic expression for pure intellectual inquiry altogether independent of empirical input, which would normally be about Forms (see especially *Phd.* 64e8–66a10)."[22]

However, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, the language of the mental operations of the soul (which portrays it as taking the *koinà* as its own subjects) in the *Theaetetus* is very similar to the language of the *Phaedo* for describing the intellectual activity of the soul.[23] Here, though, all the scholars agree the soul is applying its cognitive power to the Forms, while in the *Theaetetus* many of them claim that the soul is applying its cognitive power to a lower level of universals than the Forms. Nonetheless, as far as I am concerned, Sedley's surprise in finding the same expression for pure intellectual inquiry in both dialogues reveals that it cannot be taken for granted that the division between Socratic universals and Platonic forms is so sharp and well-grounded in the texts.

To support my view, I offer two short remarks: (1) if the cognitive power of the soul is the same in the *Phaedo* as in the *Theaetetus,* why should the objects which this kind of knowledge refers to be different: Platonic Forms in the former case and Socratic universals in the latter? (2) if the *koinà* passage is to be considered, it must be recognised that Socrates is leading Theaetetus to a kind of knowledge different from and superior to perception, namely the dianoetic knowledge of the soul. Theaetetus quickly gets the point: "Rather I believe the soul in its own right is its own organ in examining what is in common to all perceptions" (185d8–9).[24] Socrates' enthusiastic response clarifies that he hit his mark in the fastest possible way: "Indeed you are handsome, Theaetetus, and not ugly as Theodorus said. For the person who speaks so handsomely must himself be handsome, and good too. Besides being handsome, you have dome me a good turn as well, by releasing me from a very long argument. For it already appears to you that in some matters the soul itself is its own organ, whereas in others it conducts its examinations by means of body's powers.

22 Sedley 2004: 116.

23 Maffi 2014: 162–177.

24 All translations of *Theaetetus* passages are taken from Chappell 2004.

That was also what I thought myself; and I wanted you to think the same" (185e3–8). What is the long argument that Socrates does not have to make thanks to Theaetetus' correct reply? Probably the argument aiming at persuading him of the distinction between perception and knowledge and of the different objects of these two cognitive states (something similar to the second voyage of the *Phaedo* and the Line simile in the *Republic*). So here Socrates does not need to further clarify the ontological status of the *koinà* because the hint of a list of items common to all perceptions and perceived only by the soul in itself, is enough to secure Theaetetus' agreement about the existence of dianoetic knowledge of the soul. Still, if Socrates had needed to take further steps in order to acquire Theaetetus' assent, he would have pursued the argument up to the ontological status of the *koinà*. Consequently, if we look at the *koinà* I believe it is hard to give them an ontological status different from that of the Platonic Forms, because in the *Theatetus* they play the same role that the Forms play in the *Phaedo*: to mark the passage from perceptual knowledge to intellectual knowledge.

Therefore, if this distinction between Socratic universals and Platonic Forms should collapse, the same subtle division in the Digression, a division which constitutes a main part of Sedley's reading, should too. Then, if my remark is true, the Digression, in which the two levels of universals should be always working, ceases to be one of the paradigmatic example of the maieutic reading of the *Theaetetus*. In the Digression there are no Socratic universals but there are allusions to Platonic Forms. As we shall see, the philosopher of the Digression looks pretty much like the philosopher painted in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*, striving to know the essence (*ousia*) of the thing in itself (Man, Happiness, Justice) in exactly the same way as does the philosopher of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. What other kind of entities could they be, if not Platonic Forms?

At any rate, I am persuaded that because of its particular position, in the middle of the dialogue, and for Socrates' very rhetorical attitude, the Digression cannot merely be a scaled down instance of a theme (namely the mastery of Socrates as the act of birth of Platonism) that is already at stake throughout the dialogue as a whole.[25] Yet it does have something new to say in relation to the main topic of the dialogue, namely the nature of knowledge – a new perspective that helps to illuminate the dialogue's general meaning.

2.5 *Ferrari's Reading*

There is another interpretation I would like to examine briefly, by Franco Ferrari. In the wake of Sedley's reading of the Digression, the Italian scholar sees an

25 See n. 13 below.

apology for Socrates and Socratism. After the “apology” of Protagoras (166a2–168c2) Plato inserts the Digression into the main discussion in order to reassert the right of the real philosopher to be the true teacher of young people against the sophist’s claim to teach young men. Furthermore, since according to Ferrari the *Theaeteus* is also the last homage of Plato to his master, the final part of the Digression remarks “il senso di quella marginalità del filosofo nei confronti della città “malata”, destinata a trovare l’espressione più drammatica della condanna di Socrate. Ma il suo naufragio non è ancora il naufragio di Platone.”[26] Once again, the *Theaetetus* attests to Socratic failure and, at the same time, paves the way to the Platonic cure for the illness of Athens. Ferrari’s reading of the Digression is in line with his main interpretation of the dialogue, which borrows something from Cornford as well as from Sedley: with the first scholar he shares the idea that the epistemological failure of the *Theaeteus* depends on the absence of the Forms, whereas with the second he shares the idea that we can find the euporetic meaning of the dialogue in the re-evaluated figure of Socrates, the best philosophical enemy of sophist and, at the same time, the unwitting harbinger of Platonism.

However, if this is the main sense of the entire dialogue, then I cannot quite conceive the utility of the *Theaetetus*: why should Plato have written a dialogue that does not tell us anything really new beside what we have already learned from the *Phaedo* or *Republic*? If the answer is that he does it to highlight his intellectual debt to his master, this sounds to me like an inadequate response.

The least that can be said is that all these readings of the Digression attempt to reduce it to an ethical interlude against an epistemological background and then try to link it with the dialogue as a whole, grounded on the strong Socratic-Platonic connection between knowledge and virtue. I am far from rejecting the essential relation between knowledge and virtue in Platonic thought, but I am nonetheless convinced that the *Theaetetus* Digression must say something substantial concerning the problem of knowledge. The Digression does help us to understand the nature of knowledge in the dialogue insofar as it can be understood, and in this way it helps us to understand Plato’s epistemological thought.

3 The ‘Epistemological’ Role of the Digression

Now I shall offer my personal reading of the Digression. Let it not be forgotten what the main question I would like to answer is: why does Plato insert at the very heart of the *Theaetetus*, a dialogue that is governed by the ‘What

26 Ferrari 2011: 80.

is *episteme*?' question, this rhetorical and apparently ethical interlude concerning the comparison between the life of the orator and the life of the philosopher? If it is not for ethical reasons – because, at the level of Plato's ethical theory, the Digression says nothing new about the philosophical life but is limited to reasserting some platonic cornerstones already enounced in the *Apology*, *Euthypro*, *Gorgias, Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Timaeus* – it has to be for epistemological reasons.

Here, I will briefly examine its portrayal of the Platonic philosopher.

- The philosophical man conducts his arguments in peace and at leisure. He is not interested in the length or the brevity of the arguments, provided that he hits on the core of the matter (172d4–7). As a result, the philosophical man is a free man, because he can choose the subjects of his *logoi*. If he is more keen on a subsequent argument than an earlier one, he can pursue it without restriction or boundaries. He is the master of his *logoi* and not a servant of them. On the other hand, the man of rhetoric "always has to speak under the pressure of time, for the water clock harries him onwards. Nor can he shape his arguments about whatever he likes, for his opponent will not let him, and will stand over him with compulsion in his hands, in the form of a résumé of the case. This document his opponent is reading through even while he speaks, and outside it the man of rhetoric will not be allowed to speak" (172d8–e4). Thus, the orator is a slavish man because his *logos* is always addressed to a Slave-Master (the jury of citizens or the *demos* itself) that he has to flatter with words, and win over with deeds (173a2–4). The orator lacks self-knowledge and thrives on *doxa* (fame) and his completely earthly existence shows the narrowness of his perspective and his exclusive devotion to the here-and-now.[27]
- The philosophical man fails to see his next-door neighbour, so much so that he does not even know whether the neighbour is a man or some other kind of creature. He never sees or hears anything about laws and decrees, is unaware of the physical location of the market place or the law courts, and does not happily attend social functions (173d1–174b7). His aloofness and disinterestedness in the details of everyday life are so complete as to preclude awareness of his ignorance of them (173d9–e1).[28] Only the body of

27 A good example of this kind of man is Callicles in the *Gorgias*. For an interesting and detailed analysis of this platonic character completely governed by *thymos* see Fussi 2006: 183–237.

28 For his complete lack of interest in day-to-day human affairs, Rue 1993: 71–100, has argued that the philosophical life Plato depicts in *Theaetetus* is not the best possible human life; notably she claims that Socrates' description of the philosopher is "a caricature rather than an idealized portrait […] intended to portray a life as one-sided as that of the orator to whom the philosopher is counterposed" (72). According to her, only Socrates, who

the philosopher is positioned and stationed in the city. His gaze is directed outwards;[29] his mind roams the surface below and above the earth, engages in astronomy and geometry, and investigates "the whole nature of each single thing that exists in every respect; and yet never condescends to what is in front of him" (174a1–2).

- The philosopher seems ridiculous to ordinary people: this fact is witnessed by the story of Thales and the Thracian maidservant (174a4–b4). Generally speaking, anyone who gives his life to philosophy is open to such mockery. His clumsiness, due to his aloofness and ignorance of the rules of the ordinary world, makes him stupid. Thus he looks ridiculous in society, because has no idea of how to carry on a conversation. The philosopher has no interest in anyone's birth, wealth, status, or ancestry, because these are no values at all for him; but he expends all his efforts on the question of what man is and what powers and properties distinguish his nature from any other.
- However the situation is reversed and the orator becomes comic and foolish when the philosopher drags him upward "to the level of an inquiry into justice and injustice themselves, as to what each of them is and how they differ from everything else and from each other"; or "to the level of an inquiry into kingship and humanity, happiness and unhappiness, in general, asking what each member of each pair is like and how it is characteristic of human nature to obtain either or to escape them" (175c1–5). So, "when the man of rhetoric is obliged to give an account to answer such questions, the tables are turned on his sharp, legalistic small-mindedness. When he is 'suspended

inhabits the middle ground between orator and philosopher, can successfully overcome the one-sidnesses of the orator as well the one of the philosopher. As we know, Sedley 2004: 65–86, on the contrary, has asserted that the philosophical life of pure contemplation is the life of the platonic philosopher, a kind of life Socrates cannot achieve bacause he is the midwife of Platonism. Along these lines, Giannopolou 2013: 91, has made a case for Socratic midwifery as a form of godliness, even if it is a kind of godliness that is inferior to the one the Platonic philosopher can attain. All these readings distinguish in the dialogue the historical Socrates from the Platonic philosopher, and the Digression becomes Socrates' effort to become as much like god as possible for him. But the distinction between the historical Socrates and Plato is not necessary. The life of the philosopher in the Digression is an ideal portratit, because it depicts how the life of the philospher in principle should be. If he had been able to walk the whole path of knowledge, he would have become completely *sophos* – in other words he would have become like god. Instead he tries to become like god as far as possible for a man, and in this sense he remains *philosophos*. As I shall demostrate further, the third part of the *Theaetetus* provides the theretical grounds explaining why the Platonic philosopher cannot achieve this goal either. That is why not only Socrates but the Platonic philosopher as well remains *philo-sophos* and continue to yearn for life of pure contemplation as far as it is possible for a man.

29 See the *Phd.* 65c–66a.

on high', looking straight down from mid-air with the philosopher, his inexperience leaves him dizzy, perplexed, and babbling" (175d3–5).

This inability of the rhetorical man to give an account to answer to such questions is the boundary line between two radically different characters: The one is nursed in freedom and leisure, the philosopher, to whom it is no reproach to seem simple and worthless when he is engaged in servile tasks; the other smart in the dispatch of all such services, but he has not learnt to wear his cloak like a gentleman, or caught the accent of discourse that will rightly celebrate the true life of happiness for gods and men (175e3–176a2).

The first character would move away from this world dominated by pernicious quarrels and by the desire for glory and fame, flying to heaven as quickly as possible, which means becoming like god as far as possible (*homoiôsis theô kata to dynaton*). Moreover, this godliness consists in becoming "just and pious with wisdom (*meta phronêseôs*)" (176b1–2). In this sentence there are both the essential features of the philosophical life, as Plato (and Socrates as well) understands it: the epistemological and the ethical.

As recognized by many scholars,[30] the two passages that are most strictly related to this one from the *Theaetetus* are *Phd.* 69a6–c2 and *Rep.* 500b9–d2.

First I shall discuss the *Phaedo* passage:

> Yes, Simmias, my good friend; since this may not be the right exchange with a view to goodness, the exchanging of pleasures for pleasures, pains for pains, and fear for fear, greater for lesser ones, like coins; it may be, rather, that this alone is the right coin, for which one should exchange all these things- wisdom; and the buying and selling of all things for that, or rather with that, may be real bravery, temperance, justice, and, in short, true goodness in company with wisdom, whether pleasures and fears and all else of that sort be added and taken away; but as for their being parted from wisdom and exchanged from one another, goodness of that sort may be a kind of illusory façade, and fit for slaves indeed, and may have nothing healthy or true about it; whereas, truth to tell, temperance, justice, and bravery may in fact be a kind of purification of all such things, and wisdom itself a kind of purifying rite.
>
> 69a6–c2 trans. GALLOP

30 See, for instance, Spinelli 2002, Sedley 2004, Ferrari 2011, and Giannopoulou 2013.

If the virtues are separated from wisdom they lose their health and their truth and become nothing more than illusory images of goodness. Not only is truth a kind of purification of pleasure, fears, and illusory images of goodness; but wisdom and virtue as justice and temperance are means of purification. Could this kind of purification be anything other than an assimilation to god as far as possible? A few lines later (69d3–4), Socrates himself states that in trying to become one of those who have pursued philosophy correctly he left nothing undone in his life as far as he could.

The two passages, the Digression on one hand and the *Phaedo* passage on the other, have some points in common:

(1) The desire of the philosopher of the *Theaetetus* to escape from this sensible world to another, divine one is clearly in tune with the philosopher's desire for death in the *Phaedo*. This desire of escaping into another world and this desire for death are obviously not an invitation to kill oneself but an attempt to get the soul free from the chains of the body (only the body of the philosopher – says Socrates in Digression – is located in the city). (2) In both cases the effort to gain true freedom and real achievement of the soul has the shape of an epistemological enterprise: only when the philosopher disdains the body and flees from it (having the least possible communion and contact with it) can his soul attain being and truth, which is to say real wisdom. The only thing that is invariably good is wisdom itself, to the guidance of which other things owe whatever goodness they may possess. (3) In this perspective we can find a parallel between the philosopher of the Digression, whom his countrymen consider foolish and frivolous because he doesn't know the rules of the material life, and the philosopher of the *Pheado,* who, as we know from Simmias (64b), the majority of people regard as verging on death because they consider the philosopher extraneous to every form of ordinary life.

I now turn to the passage from the *Republic*. The entirety of Book 6 of the *Republic* is an attempt to show that the knowledge of the philosopher is complete enough to allow him to rule the city because his wisdom is immediately operative on an ethical and practical level. The ethical virtues are in fact deduced from the gnoseological attitude of the philosopher: the philosopher ruler will not be like the ordinary absolute ruler, free "to do whatever he likes." On the contrary he is compared to an artist working with constant reference to an unchanging model (in the case of the philosopher, Forms are the unchanging models), which irrevocably determines the outline and the basic principle of his work. These are Socrates' words:

> For surely, Adeimantus, a man whose thoughts are fixed on true reality has no leisure to look downwards in the affairs of men, to take part in their quarrels, and to catch the infection of their jealousies and hates.

> He contemplates a world of unchanging and harmonious order, where reason governs and nothing can do or suffer wrong; and, like one who imitates an admired companion, he cannot fail to fashion himself in its likeness. So the philosopher, in constant companionship with the divine order of the world, will reproduce that order in this soul and, so far as man may, become godlike; though here, as everywhere, there will be scope for detraction.
>
> 500b9–d2 trans. CORNFORD[31]

In this case too the parallel with the Digression is very clear. It is for his knowledge of the divine realm of being that the philosopher can, as far as possible, become godlike. For this reason he has to govern the city.

Cornford, and Sedley after him, find in the Digression some allusions to the allegory of the Cave in *Rep*. 7. In particular Sedley sees a hint of the language of the Cave in 175b8–d7, where Plato writes that the philosopher drags somebody upwards to a height at which he may consent to speak of justice itself. This description "has long been recognized as a pointed use of the language of the Cave, where enlightenment is a painful process, requiring the prisoner to be forcibly dragged up into the outside world."[32] I accept this remark, but not for the reasons given by Sedley, according to whom the two passages share some features but also have some differences, namely the differences between Socratism and Platonism. The Socratic philosopher drags somebody into the realm of universals only to expose his confusion and refute his answer. On the other hand, the Platonic philosopher aims not only to refute but also to teach his interlocutor how to investigate the realm of universals. In order to do this, he uses a metaphysical structure that the historical Socrates could never have.

I hold that the allusion to the Cave is useful for another reason. If it is true that the will of the philosopher in the Digression to move away from the sensible world to go to heaven can be seen as a kind of asceticism, in the same way as (it has been seen) the striving of the philosopher of the *Pheado* to detach the soul from the body, then the allusion to the Cave serves to counterbalance this sort of asceticism. The true philosopher turns his gaze to the divine realm but then he has to get his gaze downward anew, because he has to rule the city and he must teach his countrymen how to live a virtuous life. If my reading is correct, in the Digression we may find both features of the philosopher: his

31 We find something very similar in *Tim*. 90c7–d7.

32 Sedley 2004: 73.

asceticism, drawn from *Phaedo*, as well as his awareness of his political mission, drawn from *Republic*.

What more can be said about these three passages (Digression, *Phaedo,* and *Republic*)? I suggest considering the following issues:

1) In virtue of the strong similarities among the three passages, how can we still read the allusions to universals in the Digression as Socratic universals? If through the Digression Plato wants to call our attention back to the middle-period dialogues, then we should accept that he is referring to the Forms, just as they appear in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.
2) The strong Socratic-Platonic relation between knowledge and virtue is constant. Its outcome is a purification/assimilation to the divine, interpreted as the realm of Forms where the love for truth (knowledge) corresponds to moral-intellectual positive qualities (virtue).
3) In all three passages there is a limitation, a sort of prudence about the effective possibility of accomplishing the project. As far as he can, the philosopher knows the good; and in the same way, as far as possible, he becomes godlike (*Phd.* 69a, *Resp*. 500c10–d2, *Tht*. 176b2).
4) In virtue of the strict correspondence between knowledge and virtue, only the context can tell us whether Plato wants to stress the ethical or the epistemological side. In the case of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic,* it is not so easy to determine which of the two sides is stressed the most because they are both well balanced. Probably the ethical dimension is, in both cases, the most emphasized. At any rate, establishing that (which dimension is most heavily emphasized) is not so important, because in the *Phaedo* during the four attempts to prove the immortality of the soul, Plato gives many very important gnoseological suggestions. In the *Republic* too, Plato describes the metaphor of the Line, one of the cornerstones of his theory of knowledge.

What can be said about the *Theaetetus,* then? As is universally held, the dialogue takes a well-marked epistemological path although it is doomed to failure. Thus, in the Digression the epistemological dimension must be more stressed than the other: the Digression has to provide us with some necessary information for understanding the epistemological doctrine developed in the dialogue.

From the point of view of content, the Digression doesn't bring anything new, beyond what Plato said in his middle dialogues. All the ideas the Digression points out have already been explained elsewhere: (1) The freedom of the philosopher, as opposed to the slavery of the orator, is a topic of the *Gorgias*. (2) The philosopher's care for the soul rather than the body and the thesis that

there is no virtue without wisdom are discussed in the *Phaedo* as well in the *Republic*. (3) That this wisdom is the knowledge of Forms and that it is a kind of purification and assimilation to god as far as possible is argued in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*. What conclusion can be drawn from that?

As far as I am concerned, the only conclusion we may draw is that the importance of the Digression consists exactly in the fact that it does not add anything new to Plato's philosophy and in this way it actually shows that the onto-epistemological background of the *Theaetetus* is the same background in play in the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. Through the Digression, Plato warns us that the metaphysical and epistemological framework which we must use to make sense of the *Theaetetus* is still that of the middle dialogues, for the very good reason that every topic Plato accounts for in the Digression has already been explained in a more detailed way in his previous works. If my interpretation is correct, no more doubt about the ontological status of the universals in the Digression should be held. They play the same role as the Platonic Forms, so they are Platonic Forms. If someone objected to this conclusion on the ground that the universals of the Digression are not accompanied by the linguistic markers Plato usually assigns to Forms, I would reply that we have to deal with a Digression whose aim is alluding to or hinting at the theoretical structure of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. Therefore, the Digression must have the form of a suitable reminder, and a good reminder must contain only those items which make us able to recall what Plato wants us to remember.[33] Then, if Plato uses phrases like "provided only they get at what is" (172d9), "what man himself is" (174b3), and "of justice and injustice themselves" (175c2) in a passage which is admitted on all sides to allude to the themes of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, "it strains credulity to imagine that Plato is not intentionally referring to the Forms."[34]

This implies that this function of the Digression is pretty important to understanding what the role played by the *Theaetetus* in Plato's theory of knowledge is and how it contributes to Plato's epistemology.

33 See Spinelli 2002: 204–205, who rightly claims "che lo spazio breve di una trattazione, che per ammissione dello stesso Socrate rientra nel novero dei *parerga* (177b8), non può in alcun modo pretendere di avere il medesimo tasso di esaustività delle analisi consegnate ai dialoghi che ricordavamo [*Gorgia*, *Fedone*, *Repubblica*]. Anzi proprio la collocazione 'eccentrica' del "*logos* più grande" non consente a Platone di scendere nei dettagli metafisici ed etici della sua *sophia*. Ecco perché egli sceglie una via diversa. La strada più efficace o quanto meno più persuasiva, […], gli appare quella della contrapposizione fra due modi e stili di vita antitetici."

34 Chappell 2004: 127.

I am convinced that there is some truth in Cornford's observation according to which by the Digression "the *Theaetetus* opens a window upon the world of true being."[35] Still, I would prefer to say that the Digression of the *Theaetetus* offers a glimpse of the onto-epistemological background of Plato's middle dialogues. I do not agree with Cornford's view on the general meaning of *Theaetetus*. He argues that the Digression is an allusion to the true answer to the question what is knowledge, but that it can only be an allusion because the *Theaetetus* intends to show the impossibility of attaining knowledge of the sensible world without evoking the intelligible world. However, in order to satisfy this task, the first part of the dialogue would be enough. And a question still remains: what do the other two parts of the dialogue mean? Furthermore, we have already learned from the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* that the world of appearance has not in itself his *raison d'être*. So, if Cornford was right, the *Theaetetus* (and its Digression as well) says something that we already know from other dialogues. In my opinion, though, by locating a Digression on the philosophical way of life at the very heart of the dialogue, Plato aims to highlight that with the *Theaetetus* we are still in the onto-epistemological landscape outlined in his middle period dialogue. In this way it is possible to see that the new epistemological ideas that Plato introduces in the second and the third parts of the dialogue must also be set in the onto-epistemological horizon sketched in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* and called back to mind through the Digression. But the outstanding novelty of the *Theaetetus* is that, once these ideas are inserted on this horizon, they inexorably modify it and, consequently, Plato's theory of knowledge as well.

4 The General Aim of the Theaetetus

To explain the piece of Platonic doctrine that *Theaetetus* wants to provide, it is necessary to focus on the idioms of caution and prudence about the real possibility of becoming like god: *kata ton dynaton* in the *Theaetetus* and, in the *Phaedo*, *eis to dynaton tô anthrôpô* in the *Republic*.

In the *Phaedo* the meaning of this qualification is clear. True *episteme* cannot be attained until the soul has left the body because the body is an insurmountable obstacle to attaining complete *sophia*: as long as we have a body we have *philo-sophia*, the only kind of knowledge and purification possible for the human being.[36] We know that the philosophy is the second best method

35 Cornford 1935: 89.
36 On this issue see Trabattoni 2009: 65–68.

of knowledge from the metaphor of the second voyage (99d2) and from the simile of the *logos* as a kind of raft which we embark on to cross the sea of life.[37] These images recall the fact that philosophy is an indirect kind of *episteme* because it can provide the best and least refutable of humane doctrines, but it cannot provide the absolute certainty that could be given by a divine doctrine (although the text raises doubt – to say the least – that this can really exist).[38] This is attested by Socrates himself, who has good reasons to hope for a happy life in Hades, but has no guarantees about his destiny so long as he remains in his body.

The *eis to dynaton tô anthrôpô* in *Republic* points out both the difficulty of putting the theory into practice and a limitation in the theory itself. It is true that the *kallipolis* is constructed in arguments (*en tois logois*) and that it is a paradigm which human beings must imitate in order to construct the most just and best city as far as they can, but, at the same time, in the *Republic* there is not any exhaustive definition of the noetic content of justice or good. This is due to the fact that, as has been shown by Trabattoni, the knowledge of the philosopher does not involve noetic insight into the Forms, and so the philosopher cannot attain the *sophia* that, as Plato wrote in the *Phaedo*, is a kind of noetic grasp and direct vision of the Forms that the soul can reach only without the body.[39]

It is my opinion that the *Theaetetus* tries to convey the theoretical reasons for which philosophical knowledge cannot be a comprehensive and exhaustive knowledge either in the form of a direct mental grasp of the Forms effected by the eyes of mind or in the form of definitional knowledge achieved by an incessant use of dialectical methods, that is able to provide complete definitions of Forms.[40]

From the failure of the *Theaetetus,* we establish the theoretical grounds explaining why human knowledge is second-hand knowledge, or knowledge insofar as this is possible for a man. In the third part of the dialogue, in fact, Plato proceeds to explain why there is no sense of *logos* that can get human knowledge beyond the boundaries of *doxa*.[41] All the *logos* can do is make the

37 For a detailed analysis of the significance of this *Phaedo* passage see Trabattoni 2012: LXVIII–LXXII and Martinelli Tempesta 2003: 104–121.

38 See Phaedo 85d and Trabattoni 2012: n. 137 *ad locum*.

39 See *Phaedo* 66e–67b and Trabattoni 2003: 151–186 and 2012: XXIII–XXVII.

40 For a similar reading of the general meaning of the dialogue see Trabattoni 2009: 138–139 and Trabattoni 2010: 305–317.

41 For a detailed analysis of this point see Trabattoni 2006: 16–27 Trabattoni 2010: 303–313 and Maffi 2014: 249–278.

doxai better and better, and more informative, but it can't transform them into *epistemai*. Here there is no time or space to explain why and how this is, as I have done elsewhere. In brief, though, in my earlier works on the *Theaetetus* I have shown that in the holistic system proposed by Plato in the third part of the dialogue (the so-called Dream Theory) the *logos* is able to acquire some information and some relations among the items that compose the holistic structure (the Form) it has to know, but it cannot attain complete knowledge of the structure as a whole. To do that it would be necessary to achieve a direct kind of knowledge, a noetic insight that is impossible for the human *logos* during its earthly life.[42] Therefore, the *Theaetetus* clarifies why, from an epistemological point of view, the knowledge of the philosopher is always accompanied by an expression of prudence and limitation, the same expression of prudence and limitation that follows the attempts to become like god in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. In order to really appreciate the novelty the *Theaetetus* brings to Plato's theory of knowledge, it must be put into the epistemological framework of the middle dialogues. The Digression plays exactly this vital role: linking the *Theatetus* to Plato's middle dialogues.

5 Conclusion

Some scholars rightly claim that we cannot read the *Theaetetus* outside the context sketched in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* but they have many difficulties finding direct evidence of this context in our dialogue. They also conclude that we have to guess that the context of the middle dialogues is tacitly implied in *Theaetetus*. For instance, let us consider Ferrari. He correctly claims that we must interpret the *Theaetetus* in light of middle-period works, but, because he cannot find hints of them in the text, he argues as follows: if we hope to avoid importing the epistemological framework of the *Theaetetus* from Mars, we must suppose that it comes by way of the middle dialogues.[43] Far from being a guess, the onto-epistemological horizon of the middle dialogues is explicitly stated in *Theaetetus* through the Digression. Why have scholars not seen this so far? Because they have been victims of a modern prejudice inaugurated by Cornford: the *Theaetetus* must be only an indirect confirmation of *Republic* and *Phaedo*, and specifically of those passages that claim that the only knowledge is knowledge of Forms. As Cornford wrote, "the

42 See Maffi 2007: 10–21 and Maffi 2014: 249–259.

43 Ferrari 2011: 140.

Theaetetus leads to this old conclusion by demonstrating the failure of all attempts to extract knowledge from sensible objects."[44] If Cornford is right, the previous problem occurs: is the *Theaetetus*, a dialogue so rich, complicated, and full of philosophical problems, really just an indirect confirmation of what we can easily learn from other dialogues? At any rate, this 'cornfordian' prejudice has much influenced the subsequent interpretation of the dialogue. As the *Theaetetus* is essentially an indirect confirmation of Plato's middle dialogue, the Digression has been read, in the best cases, as an ethical passage or as the most important homage of Plato to Socrates, his master and midwife, and, in the worst cases, as a useless display of rhetoric. Actually, if the *Theaetetus* has something new to say on Plato's theory of knowledge, then the Digression becomes an important and integral part of the dialogue as a whole, because it warns us that the epistemological issues of the second and the third part of the *Theaetetus* must be located in the onto-epistemological framework of Plato's middle dialogues. Only in this way can the role played by the *Theaetetus* in Plato's theory of knowledge be appreciated.

According to Burnyeat one of the most important points of the dialogue is to understand whether the *Theaetetus* is a breaking point in relation to the *Republic* and Plato's middle dialogues or, on the contrary, it is in continuity with them. He responds that the *Theaetetus* is a breaking point because it opens a third epistemic route that goes beyond the earlier epistemology of the *Republic,* grounded in the Two-World Theory.[45]

I think that, if rightly understood, the Digression states explicitly that the horizon of the middle dialogues is still in place and therefore that the Two-World Theory is still alive. If I am right, the Digression is not a mere ethical interlude, barely integrated to the rest of dialogue. Rather it plays a central role in marking the continuity between *Theaetetus* and Plato's middle dialogues. This continuity makes the *Theaetetus* not an indirect confirmation of Plato epistemology but a pivotal work in understanding the best human knowledge (*alethes doxa meta logou*) as *philo-sophia* and, consequently, the true goal of Plato's epistemology.

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44 Cornford 1935: 163.
45 Burnyeat 1990: 238–240.

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CHAPTER 9

Kompsoi Logoi

Some Remarks on Plato's Linguistic Conventionalism and Its Ethical Implications

Mariapaola Bergomi

Abstract

I shall discuss some aspects of Plato's theory of language and linguistic conventionalism. My aim is to show that Plato's approach to linguistics reflects first of all his personal position on the first generation (Protagoras, Gorgias, the Eristics) and especially the second generation (Isocrates) sophists; moreover, his personal conception of conventionalism is a response to Sophistic epistemological relativism. Indeed, Plato takes up and rereads Sophistic conventionalism in order to endorse a Socratic teaching method which is not only focused on the *techne* of language but carries meaningful messages and a philosophical content. I shall analyse some well known passages from Plato's dialogues and I shall analyse some passages from Isocrates' orations as well, in order to show (i) that Plato and Isocrates converge on the idea that it is necessary to build a new philosophical language (ii) that they diverge in the conception of technical language, the social nature of language and the goal of teaching virtue.

In my paper I shall discuss some aspects of Plato's theory of language and linguistic conventionalism:[1] my aim is to show that Plato's approach to linguistics reflects first of all his personal position on the first generation (Protagoras, Gorgias, the Eristics) and especially the second generation (Isocrates) sophists; moreover, his personal conception of conventionalism is a response to Sophistic epistemological relativism. Indeed, Plato takes up and rereads Sophistic conventionalism in order to endorse a Socratic teaching method which is not only focused on the *techne* of language but carries meaningful messages and a philosophical content. I shall analyse some well-known passages from Plato's dialogues and I shall analyse some passages from Isocrates' orations as

1 I had the opportunity to present a draft version of this paper during the Milano-Freiburg conference held in Freiburg in Breisgau in May 2015 as part of a project funded by DAAD. I'm heartily thankful to all of the participants and to the anonymous referee who read and commented my paper.

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well, in order to show (i) that Plato and Isocrates converge on the idea that it is necessary to build a new philosophical language (ii) that they diverge in the conception of technical language, the social nature of language and the goal of teaching virtue.

In other words, I aim to discuss some aspects of Plato's approach to linguistics and its ethical implications in a political context. Let me proceed with a preliminary remark on what I mean here by the expressions "linguistics," "ethical implications," and "political context." Generally speaking, by "linguistics" I mean the idea of a general Platonic theory of language and meaning, i.e. his ideas about the natural or the conventional correctness of names we currently use, and consequently the epistemological value of language as both part and *medium* of knowledge; I will come back to this crucial point in the very first stage of the paper. With the expression "ethical implications," I want to stress the importance of a certain conception of language and meaning in view of the Platonic concern for the moral development of citizens who use both an everyday common-sense language and a technical language by practicing rhetoric. Finally, by "political context," I refer to the Athenian social environment in the late 5th century and Plato's age as well; the reason for this choice is that, in my view, Plato's concern about the nature of language is not separated from, but rather strictly linked to, his criticism of the decadence of the political aristocratic *paideia*: this is also the reason why I shall analyse, at the end of the paper, its relationship with both sophistic linguistic conventionalism and Isocrates' rhetoric-centered educational approach.[2]

> Sophistic rhetoric so-called should really be translated as the technique of linguistic expression. Sophistic argued that as this was studied and clarified and made more effective the norms of justice and social order became clearer. Moreover, discourse is social or it is nothing; its topics and problems are by definition common ones, group notions; the words of men act on other men and vice versa. There is exchange of opinion, consensus and decision. It is not discourse carried on in the private soul.[3]

2 The underlying link between the concern for education and the nature of *logos* (as both language and reason) does not apply only to Plato; it characterizes the history of Athens. "Athens was the city and the empire of logos, which is to say that logos is implicated in Athenian history and life to such an extent that it can hardly be done justice in this brief summary. The whole rise of Athens, as told explicitly by Herodotus and implicitly by Thucydides (as we will see), is related to logos. This goes beyond the obvious role of logos as public discourse and its role in a democracy; the logos of Athens, interms of its structure, had to change before there could be a democracy in which logos as public speech thrived" (see Schanske 2006: 27).

3 See Havelock 1957.

This very well known passage written by Eric Havelock addresses the idea of the social and shared nature of language; moreover, Havelock finds good reasons for interpreting sophistic rhetoric as some sort of sociology of language, a peculiar practice through which the old teachers managed, according to the author, to make social norms and laws clearer thanks to a linguistic awarness and thanks to a technical, though attainable, language.[4] What is especially interesting to me is the interpenetration between the idea of a linguistic *techne* and normative and ethical content. Despite its obvious originality, Plato's work cannot be understood apart from the influence of Sophistic and its critical dialogue with it; moreover, it is useful to leave behind completely some old views according to which Plato criticizes the Sophists only because (i) they got payed for teaching young people (ii) they care for the external and formal aspects of language only (iii) their rhetoric was devoid of any content. It is certainly true that Plato – especially in some early dialogues such as the *Euthydemus* and the *Gorgias* – seems to accuse the Sophists of teaching mere forms without care for the content to fill them; however, Plato does take the Sophists seriously and is especially interested, in my view, in (i) the social dimension of language and a philosophy of language which takes into consideration the pragmatic aspects of the habit of communicating with others (ii) the epistemology at the basis of the Sophistic conception of language.

On this last point, let us consider the fact that Protagoras' and Gorgias' use of rhetorical discourse is not unrelated but rather closely dependant on their epistemology and ontology. For Gorgias especially – for we do not possess the entire text of Protagoras' *Aletheia* or his other writings – on the basis of his treatise *On What is Not* (*Peri tou me ontos*) is certainly true that his conception of rhetoric and deceptive *logos* lies on his strong belief that things no more are than are not, meaning that we cannot describe the beings as long as the very verb "to be" does not apply correctly to any of the phenomena in the world we actually experience. Plato inherits and elaborates this line of thought, building his own theory of language as a powerful response to Sophistic conception of linguistic conventionalism and rhetoric.

In using the expression "theory of language" with regards to Plato, I want to address the idea of both a broad conception of *logos* as a whole (a complex system of statements, a discourse, and even the exercise of the *dialegesthai*

4 See Jarratt 1991: 95 ff. ("Not only was rhetoric a democratizing agent, democracy itself was an education in language use and political decision-making" […] "The philosophy of language implied by these historical accounts is endorsed by many progressive theorists in composition and rhetoric today as in other disciplines. Bowles and Gintis, for example, in *Democracy and Capitalism*, assert that ideas do not preexist their enactment in language.")

itself) and a narrow conception of *logos* as a structure composed by *onomata* (words and nouns) and *rhemata* (both verbs and phrases). It is not unusual, in recent scholarship, to refer to a "philosophy of language" in Plato, especially because he wrote the very first work in western thought – namely the *Cratylus* – explicitly devoted to the problem of the origin and the semantic correctness of words.[5] I am well aware that no single unequivocal interpretation of Plato's "correctness of names" and approach to language and linguistics is possible, given the natural difference among the dialogues in which this issue is raised – I am especially referring to the *Euthydemus*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Phaedo*, the trilogy on language *Cratylus*/*Theaetetus*/*Sophist*, and the *Timaeus* as well – and also the puzzling double-refutation of both the interlocutors in the *Cratylus* and the aporetic outcome of the dialogue itself.[6] As is clear from the title of my paper, I support a reading of the *Cratylus,* and the platonic approach to linguistics in general, which speaks in favour of a somewhat conventional interpretation of language (as systems of symbols), i.e. a *logos* as complex of sentences composed of verbs and nouns following regular patterns in which the phonetic aspect of the words does not play any role in the understanding of the meaning; a *logos* which is able to describe reality but unable to grasp the essence of it in the perceptible world. But is this the genuine position of Plato? Let's step back to the dialogue for a moment. As has been convincingly argued,[7] Socrates' quarrel with Hermogenes is not designed to criticize a broad conception of conventionalism – which is eventually supported by Plato himself – nor a radical conventionalism like a pointless "humpty dumpty" position[8] in which everybody can always decide to baptize with a name, and privately change a name, in a fully arbitrary way. On the contrary, in the first part of the *Cratylus*, Socrates is criticizing linguistic conventionalism as *conservatism*, i.e., a system of communication in which every name is supposed to be correct because of its established, historical, use in a given speaker's community's customs.[9] Even

5 For a useful overview, significantly entitled "Plato's philosophy of language," see Crivelli 2008.
6 By "double-refutation" I am referring to the double refutation of both the conventional and the natural conception of correctness of names contained in the framework of the dialogue. I will return to this point later in my paper. For an overview of the dialogue's structure see Ademollo 2011.
7 Barney 1997: 143–162.
8 See Plato, *Cra.*, 385 ab.
9 See Barney 1997: 146. "Hermogenes' position is presented, not as far-fetched and subversive in its implications, but as commonsensical and reasonably well supported: what inspires Plato to reject it is his sense that it is perniciously uncritical of our established naming practices. For the crucial feature of Hermogenes' conventionalism, I will argue, is that it entails the thesis I will term *conservatism* about names: all our actual or positive names (i.e. everything socially recognised as a name) are ipso facto correct."

if the notion of custom and habit – both identified with the Greek broad notion of *nomos* – does have an important role for the understanding of some crucial features of the dialogue[10] (such as the nature of Nomothetes), it is easily understandable that Plato could not accept such a conservative position on the correctness of names, precisely because this is compatible with Protagoras' relativism (i.e., if every name I have inherited from the tradition and I currently use as a habit is correct, how can I distinguish a true speech from a false one?), and especially because the philosophical *logos* is radically different from everyday common-sense language, and even from the high-flown language of poetic composition. It is important to stress the link between language and tradition (or custom, or habit), because Plato's version of linguistic conventionalism is designed, in my view, both to criticize conservatism and to promote a new version of a reasonably correct language for education and philosophy.[11] As in the case of norms and laws, the philosopher will deconstruct tradition and traditional *logos* to promote a new "philosophically sound" language.[12] But – given that Plato radically criticizes both a "humpty dumpty" form of conventionalism and a conservative form of conventionalism – why doesn't he endorse a full linguistic naturalism?[13] The answer is twofold: there is a simple answer that derives from the aporetic outcome of the dialogue and the refutation of Cratylus himself, and a second, wider, answer that is grounded in the Platonic

10 See Plato, *Cra.*, 388 de.

11 See Barney 1997: 157 ff. "Further reflection on Hermogenean conventionalism is bound to raise a pressing question: can we really assume that all conventions are equally correct? Convention is to be grounded in decision and fiat; but we commonly suppose that our decisions express judgements, and that some judgements are better than others. Once this epistemological question has been raised, the conventionalist is faced with a dilemma. One option is to argue that all conventions are equally correct because all beliefs and decisions are equally correct. This option uses Protagorean relativism to preserve conservatism […] The alternative route is Plato's choice, realism: the recognition that people can be right or wrong about what constitutes a correct name or a just law, and that expert knowledge is what makes the difference. This political parallel is no coincidence. Like laws and constitutions, names are social constructions, at once inheritances from time immemorial and subject to change for better or worse. It is no accident that in the *Cratylus*, conventionalism is introduced using the deeply political vocabulary of "compact" (syntheke) and "convention" (nomos). Moreover, Hermogenes' evidence for conventionalism – the local variations in names from city to city and the possibility of name-change – is just that used elsewhere to argue that other social institutions are a matter of mere convention."

12 The expression "philosophically sound language" is taken from Baxter 1992.

13 Although it is not a major position in the scholarship on the *Cratylus*, there are some positions in favour of a reading according to which Plato is actually endorsing a naturalistic view of correctness, even though this view does not coincide with Cratylus's view. See for instance Aronadio 2011.

use of dialectics. As for the first one, Cratylus' refutation clearly shows that the phonetic aspect of words does not provide us with knowledge of the essence of the thing indicated by its name;[14] indeed, etymological inquiry shows a weakness derived from the historical contamination of language and our ignorance about the original "baptism" of the things. Moreover, proper names are especially affected by arbitrariness,[15] and even divine names and common nouns have multiple alternative explanations.[16] As for the second one, I will try to elaborate my point on dialectics and conventionalism in this paper, from the point of view of the influence of a specific conception of *logos* and language in the ethical and political dimension. I shall start from the bottom – that is, from the cave.

In her paper *Language in the Cave*, Verity Harte offers a brilliant interpretation of the prisoner's communication in the cave allegory, *R.*, 515 ac.[17] Her analysis and conclusion will be useful to clarify what I mean by conventionalism in the case of Platonic dialectics and to introduce my main topic. As is well known, the allegory of the cave offers one of the most important and puzzling images in Plato's *Republic*: the condition of ignorance suffered by the prisoners is usually considered from an onto-epistemological point of view, in analogy with the image of the line: by this I mean that attention is especially given to the ontological status of the shadows they see on the wall, and also to the figures of the objects carried by the men outside, figures which are not the things themselves but schematic *mimemata*, imitations as reproductions, of the real things. However, Harte draws attention to a detail usually neglected by commentators,[18] that is, the possibility that the prisoners can speak to each

14 See Plato, *Cra.*, 393 ae, 433 a ff.

15 *Ibidem*, 397 b.

16 On the refutation of Cratylus' naturalism see for instance Ademollo 2011: 383–424.

17 Harte 2007: 195–216. It is useful to recall here, as an introductory remark, that Harte follows Adam's text for the lines 515b4–5. While Slings read *onomazein* instead of *nomizein* and admits the presence of a "language issue," Burnet does not refer in his edition to the prisoners speaking. "This exploration takes the form of four questions and answers and a resumptive assertion at 515c1–3. The first two questions invite Glaucon to consider what he thinks the prisoners have seen (*eorakenai*, 515a6), first, of themselves and each other (515a5–b1) and, second, of the objects being carried along behind them (515b2–3). The remaining two questions invite Glaucon to draw consequences from the answers to the first two questions, subject to reflection on two additional conditions: first, that the prisoners be envisaged as having the ability to talk to one another (515b4–6); and second, that the cave should have an echo that the prisoners can hear (515b7–10)."

18 In accepting Burnet's text, the most important recent edition of Plato's *Republic* in Italy, otherwise excellent, misses this point, not considering the speaking of the prisoners among themselves but only the ontological illusions of the shadows. See Vegetti 2007.

other, hear the echo in the cave, and suppose that they name the shadows of the things cast on the wall instead of the things themselves:

> εἰ οὖν διαλέγεσθαι οἷοί τ᾽ εἶεν πρὸς ἀλλήλους, οὐ ταῦτα ἡγῇ ἂν τὰ παριόντα αὐτοὺς (νομίζειν) ὀνομάζειν ἅπερ ὁρῷεν;
>
> And if they could talk to one another, don't you think they'd suppose that the names they used applied to the things they see passing before them?[19]

In Harte's interpretation, the passage informs us not only that the prisoners, hypothetically, can talk, but also that, by naming the figures of the objects, they correctly refer to the things outside even though they suppose themselves to name the shadows, because – as is obvious – they cannot see the objects carried by the men. The presence of the verb ὀνομάζειν is interesting indeed, especially because it introduces a new element into the picture and provides us with the information that the prisoners, who are "like us" (as Plato explicitly says[20]) can communicate with a certain regularity, even naming something incorrectly (accepting Sling's text), or even (accepting Adam's text) mistaking the things that they are naming. Harte's main interest is to cast light on the controversy arising from the fact that the prisoners can refer to the right things but at the same time suppose themselves to name the wrong items for those correct references (i.e., the shadows).[21] Harte first considers interpreting the prisoners' situation with the "brain-in-a-vat" mental experiment, but she correctly dismisses this approach because the brains in that thought experiment cannot perceive themselves as brains in a vat and cannot definitely improve their condition and set themselves free (or do better than being set free), as the prisoners in the cave can do. Even more interesting, it is necessary that the

19 See Harte 2007: 197. As I have already mentioned in my previous footnote n. 14, the text accepted by the author is that of Adam 1902. Burnet 1902 does not mention ὀνομάζειν, while Slings 2003 does mention ὀνομάζειν, but omits νομίζειν.

20 See Plato, *R.,* 515a3. This "like to us" pronounced by Socrates after the initial surprise of Glaucon is noted by Harte too and it is important for my next inquiry.

21 See Harte 2007: 196. "If you asked a prisoner to point to the object to which a term he uses refers, he would point to one of the shadows on the wall of the cave. Nevertheless, I shall argue, the prisoners' terms, in the prisoners' usage, correctly refer – unbeknownst to the prisoners themselves – to the object and not to the shadows. (This is where the controversy begins) [...] The prisoners, in talking and using certain names or terms, refer to real things (the objects models of which cast the shadows). They do so despite the fact that they do not take themselves to do so; they themselves would point to the shadows (that is, to what in fact are shadows) as that to which they refer."

prisoners, to communicate successfully, use nouns with a certain correctness, and that there be a basic regularity in the items they refer to.[22] Now at this point two big questions arise. First of all, how is it possible that, even if the item/reference relation in the prisoners' language is wrong, the prisoners can actually understand each other and name the right object outside the cave? And second, how is it possible that some of the prisoners set themselves free and persuade others to escape? Harte's answer to the first question is that the prisoners start off with some "cognitive grip" on the objects (referents) of the names they use in the cave and that they are mistaken in pointing to the shadow as the actual referent because of the distorting context of their environment.[23] This is the main point of disagreement between me and Harte: even though she recognizes that the cognitive grip could work as a form of learning like recollection, she denies that Plato is here explicitly referring to recollection.[24] I find this explanation redundant, and I'm inclined to think that recollection has a prominent role in this section of the *Republic,* as it does elsewhere in middle Plato. Moreover, recollection is one of the basic assumptions for

22 *Ibidem*, 200. "Although the prisoners have mistaken views about the reference of the terms they use, and hence make any number of mistakes about the nature of the objects to which they in fact refer; it would appear that, by and large, when they use a term – the term "ox" for example – under the mistaken impression that the thing they are talking about is one of the shadows on the wall, then the shadow in question is as a matter of fact a shadow of a model of an ox, as opposed to a shadow of a model of some other animal. The second feature of the prisoners' situation to which I wish to call attention, then, is the systemic correspondance between the items the prisoners would be mistakenly inclined to point to as the referents of the terms that they use and the actual referents of the terms that they use."

23 *Ibidem*, 209–211. "My own proposal is that, in order to explain both of the puzzling features of the prisoners' situation, we must assume that the prisoners start off with some cognitive grip on the actual referents of their terms, however they may be taught to have obtained it […] If the reference-securing factor is not to be found in the physical environs of the prisoners, or in their social, linguistic community, what is left, but for the explanation to turn on what's in their heads? […] What I have in mind, if I understand him correctly, is something similar to what Christopher Peacock (2003) calls an *implicit conception.*"

24 *Ibidem*, 213. "There is evidence that the explanation offered here is a sort of explanatory strategy that Plato would favour in the fact that, elsewhere in his work, he puts forward the thesis that learning is recollection. […] Note that I am not suggesting that, behind the depiction of the situation of the prisoners as regards the use of language, is an implicit appeal to the thesis that learning is recollection. Rather, my claim is that the explanatory strategy at work in the proposal that learning is recollection is of broadly the same sort as that which I'm proposing as the explanation of the prisoners' situation, and that this fact offers additional support for my proposal."

Plato's own approach to language as a medium of knowledge and education (in the *Phaedo*, the *Theaetetus* etc). As for the second question, whether the prisoners can escape and how, given their deprived condition, I fully agree with Harte in saying that there's a fundamental difference among them that gives some the opportunity to get liberated or escape, and then persuade the others to improve their condition. This is possible because we are different in our learning skills and basically different in the successful achievement of knowledge, and also because language and meaning are not transparent, necessary phenomena, but rather opaque and conventional ones. The success of a prisoner is not defined exclusively by his ascent from the cave, but also by his understanding of the epistemological and ontological difference between levels of reality (things, figures, and shadows as objects) and utterances (words and names as references).[25] Like the shadows, names as *mimemata* – as they are sometimes described in the dialogues, the *Cratylus* for instance,[26] or even in the *Seventh Letter*[27] – are three degrees distant from reality, though they are the only instrument of communication, learning, and education among the prisoners or, leaving metaphor aside, among human beings. We are now back at the starting point: the conventional character of language, along with its epistemological defectiveness and its ethical and educational implications. It is clear that, beyond the fact of referring to ontology and epistemology, the cave allegory is a powerful image of our condition "as regards education and its lack" (514a2), and it's not surprising that Plato is concerned with language as an instrument for the ascent from the cave, i.e., for the education of the

25 *Ibidem*, 213. "The prisoners' linguistic condition involves a peculiar combination of success and failure. They succeed in referring to real things, despite their apparent utter ignorance about them. They fail in misidentifying the shadows as the real things to which they refer. Their success is integral to their failure. If asked what an ox is, the prisoners will point to what is as a matter of fact a shadow of a model of an ox. In doing so, they make a mistake. They make a mistake in doing so, because when they talk of ox, they mean ox, whatever they may point to. Succeeding and failing as they do, they fail to have (proper, identificatory) knowledge of ox or, for that matter, of shadows of models of them."

26 See for instance Plato, *Cra.*, 439 a.

27 The reference to the *Seventh Letter* is much more controversial, but I would like to stress the importance of the mention of names in the philosophical digression. Readers can find interesting considerations on the relationships between the *Seventh Letter* and the *Cratylus* in Burnyeat 2015. I personally disagree with his main point; I do think that the links between the letter and the dialogue are genuine and I also find Burnyeat's judgement much less charitable than necessary, "I propose to attack this lazy solution by arguing that VII was not written by any philosopher: not by Plato, not a pupil of Plato, nor even by a philosophical critic of Plato. The author is philosophically incompetent."

governing body of the city;[28] in the effort to set their fellows free, the former prisoners have to possess knowledge of things "as they are" and linguistic skills that enable them to persuade others. The persuasion is not meant to be used in a sophistical way, but rather in a helpful – maieutic – way, as performed by a philosophically educated soul.[29]

The interpenetration between use of language, communication of ethical values, and political performance is a very common feature all over Plato, both in the early dialogues and in the later works. Socrates himself is always depicted as a man who knows instruments of knowledge and who's able to perform in the public space. Even if he says of himself that he wouldn't be able to perform well in court, his statement of possessing a natural interest in politics sets him at the centre of the scene, as we read in the *Gorgias*:

> οἶμαι μετ᾽ ὀλίγων Ἀθηναίων, ἵνα μὴ εἴπω μόνος, ἐπιχειρεῖν τῇ ὡς ἀληθῶς πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ καὶ πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ μόνος τῶν νῦν: ἅτε οὖν οὐ πρὸς χάριν λέγων τοὺς λόγους οὓς λέγω ἑκάστοτε, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον, οὐ πρὸς τὸ ἥδιστον, καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλων ποιεῖν ἃ σὺ παραινεῖς, τὰ κομψὰ ταῦτα, οὐχ ἕξω ὅτι λέγω ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ.
>
> I think I am one of few, not to say the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship, and the only man of the present time who manages affairs of state: hence, as the speeches that I make from time to time are not aimed at gratification, but at what is best instead of what is most pleasant, and as I do not care to deal in "these pretty toys" that you recommend, I shall have not a word to say in the court.[30]

28 See Harte 2007: 213. "The cave is introduced as an image in which we find some semblance of our nature 'as regards education and its lack'" (514a2). And it yelds a moral about education: that education is not a matter of putting knowledge into a soul in which it is presently lacking; the power to learn and the instrument by which we learn are present in the soul of each of us; education is the art, not of implanting this power to learn, but of turning around the soul so that its existing power is oriented correctly (518b7–d7). Obviosuly enough, the Cave analogy is concerned to emphasize the enormity of this educational task; what the prisoners' minimal success ensures is that the intellectual journey – if made – involves no radical discontinuity or change of subject."

29 Even Isocrates, as I will try to explain in a while, recognized – though from a very different point of view – that a soul is much more likely to be persuaded by another good soul. See for instance Poulakos 1995: 129. "As Isocrates explains it, the acquisition of wisdom has at least three requirements: the ambition to speak well, the desire to persuade others, and the wish to seize one's advantage. [...] In all three cases, the principle observed by those seeking wisdom is that people are most persuaded by a good person. But if this is so, studies in rhetoric cannot help but improve one's sense of honesty and justice."

30 See Plato, *Grg.*, 521 d.

The translation unfortunately misses the elegance of the repetition of the expressions *politike techne* and *prattein ta politika*, and the explicit allitteration in the sentence containing the repetition of *logos*. This is not merely a stylistic evidence: I think it's clear that Plato has designed the speech of Socrates to criticize precisely the κομψοὶ λόγοι mentioned at the end of the quote, implicitly showing his ability to master different kind of discourses, but also his desire to avoid an elegant and charming performance in the *dikasterio*. The adjective κομψός (in the plural τὰ κομψά) is particularly meaningful for my inquiry. The adjective κομψός is a frequent presence in Plato's dialogue all over the *corpus*, both in the normal form and in the comparative and superlative. Ast, Brandwood, *et alii* count more than 30 occurrences, with a more noticeable presence in the *Cratylus*, the *Theaetetus,* and the *Republic*. As far as I can see, the large majority of the occurrences have a slightly negative or ironic nuance of meaning, usually in contexts where rhetoric or other forms of non-philosophical practices are involved. They often refer directly to people practicing a certain art of speaking or speculating, or giving a specific account of a difficult topic or argument, as *R*. V 505 b, where Socrates is charitably lampooning the clever guys who identify the good with knowledge, with the consequence of finding themselves forced to say that this knowledge is nothing but knowledge, once again, of the good, which remains undefined.[31] In the *Sophist*, κομψός appears in a reference to the cleverest way in which the sophist escapes definition and manages to hide without being placed clearly in any category.[32] In the *Symposium*, significantly, it refers to the way in which Alcibiades has enfolded himself "charmingly," κομψῶς, to veil the real subject of his speech, that is Socrates, showing rhetorical ability but also acting somehow flirtatiously.[33] While in the *Gorgias* the adjective is used by Socrates to address the idea of a sophistical performance, a piece of rhetorical ability, both in the *Theaetetus* and the *Cratylus* the term stands to indicate anonymous experts in physics and etymology, often supporting a heraclitean view of the eternal flux:

> ἄλλοι δὲ πολὺ κομψότεροι, ὧν μέλλω σοι τὰ μυστήρια λέγειν. ἀρχὴ δέ, ἐξ ἧς καὶ ἃ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν πάντα ἤρτηται, ἥδε αὐτῶν, ὡς τὸ πᾶν κίνησις ἦν καὶ ἄλλο παρὰ τοῦτο οὐδέν, τῆς δὲ κινήσεως δύο εἴδη, πλήθει μὲν ἄπειρον ἑκάτερον, δύναμιν δὲ τὸ μὲν ποιεῖν ἔχον, τὸ δὲ πάσχειν.[34]

31 See Plato, *R.*, 505 b (τοῖς δὲ κομψοτέροις φρόνησις).

32 See Plato, *Sph.*, 236d2 (ἀλλ' ὄντως θαυμαστὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ κατιδεῖν παγχάλεπος, ἐπεὶ κεὶ νῦν μάλα εὖ καὶ κομψῶς εἰς ἄπορον εἶδος διερευνήσασθαι καταπέφευγεν).

33 See Plato, *Smp.*, 222c4.

34 See Plato, *Tht.*, 156a. ("But these others, whose mysteries I am going to tell you, are a much more subtle type. These mysteries begin from the principle on which all that we have just been saying also depends, namely, that everything is really motion, and there is nothing

Scholars have not formulated precise hypotheses about the identity of these anonymous "very elegant" philosophers, except for that which identifies these thinkers with the Socratic Cyrenaics, a hypothesis that seems to me difficult to support with textual evidence.[35] It is surprising that none of the commentators of the *Theaetetus* ever mentioned the *Cratylus*, where the adjective (in simple and comparative form, and as an adverb as well) appears a number of times. At 399 a, it is used by Socrates to make fun of the inspiration received as a divine gift from the priest Euthyphro, while at 429 d it's taken up to criticize the ambiguity of the position of Cratylus about the natural correctness of names and not-being. It seems to me pretty curious that Plato makes use of this peculiar term to criticize the sophists' manner of expression in court and the oracular ambiguity of Cratylus and the anonymous heraclitean thinkers;[36] it is curious because, apparently, sophists and heracliteans (at least in the *Cratylus*) support very different, or rather opposite, views of linguistic correctness. On the one hand, Gorgias, Prodicus and – as I shall briefly argue – the eristic brothers of the *Euthydemus* support a form of conventionalism in which the interchangeability of reference leads to a mental confusion which makes philosophical dialogue impossible; on the other hand, the etymologists and the heraclitean supporters strongly believe in the power of a natural correspondence between the referent and the reference of a name, even if this

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but motion. Motion has two forms, each an infinite multitude, but distinguished by their powers, the one being active and the other passive." Trans. Levett, rev. Burnyeat).

35 Burnyeat 1990: 16 offers a very interesting reconstruction of the *kompsoteroi* argument, but does not propose any solution to identify the anonymous thinkers. Sedley 2004: 41 seems to have in mind this passage when he states that "Although the analogy is helpful, we should be very wary of attributing to Plato this full notion of the privacy of the mental, which as far as I am aware become a familiar philosophical tenet only with the Cyrenaic school, probably at too late a date to have any impact upon the *Theaetetus*." Ferrari 2011 in footnote n. 94 of his recent Italian translation excludes the identification of the *kompsoteroi* with the Cyrenaics, "Il termine *amousoi* significa letteralmente privi delle Muse, ossia mancanti di un'adeguata formazione, di cui appunto le Muse rappresentano il simbolo. Anche l'accenno ai misteri suona in bocca a Socrate in questo contesto vagamente ironico; […] Certamente ironico, per non dire addirittura sarcastico, risulta poi l'appellativo di *kompsoteroi*, che spesso Platone utilizza per indicare personaggi che si arrogano la pretesa di possedere un sapere che in realtà è solo presunto." Gabriele Giannantoni also excludes the possibility of identifying the *kompsoteroi* with some sort of Socratics.

36 For the sake of precision, there's indeed another interesting hypothesis about the identity of these anonymous thinkers, who can be linked to an Anaxagorean cultural environment as well. In fact, Anaxagoras is mentioned as auctoritas in etymology more than once in the *Cratylus*. See for instance Baxter 1992.

link often remains unexplained because its origin is somehow magical and oracular, as does for the disciples of Euthyphro or (as Plato says) Orpheus.[37] The solution to this puzzle seems to me simple, in light of Plato's own position on conventionalism. Both sophistic conventionalism and naturalism end up in a situation of non-communication and radical anti-philosophical discourse. As for the sophists, their educational mission is only apparent and it doesn't provide any improvement of the pupils' knowledge of things.[38] This holds both in the case of rhetoric (for instance, the art of defending oneself in the *dikasterio* as mentioned in the *Gorgias*), and in the case of eristic dialogue; as for the supporters of naturalism, the necessary correspondence between referent and reference in any name leads to the impossibility of pronouncing false statements, and most importantly falls in a number of contradictions, as is clearly argued in the third section of the *Cratylus*.[39] In both cases, the original sin is emptiness: no matter how elegant, κομψός, a speech or an etymology is, its message will be completely empty of philosophical content.

The topic of false statements and emptiness leads us to Plato's philosophical manifesto against linguistic trickery and its devastating effects on learning and the ethical *paideia* of young pupils, the *Euthydemus*. The *Euthydemus* is a key text not only because of Plato's critique of eristic itself, but also for the importance attributed to the pragmatic and contextual aspects of the philosophical dialogue. A philosophical dialogue follows its own rules, and it needs agreement on both how to display an argument and what kind of language is suitable for the argument. The attitude of the eristic brothers in confusing the interlocutor is basically grounded in semantic ambiguity, and just like the *kompsoi* experts in rhetoric or etymologies, they enjoy deceiving their interlocutors using linguistic jokes and tricks:

37 I am referring to the important etymologies of *psyche* and *soma* at *Cra.*, 399 d-400 c.

38 "Inasmuch as the sophists' purpose was to demonstrate that the world could always be recreated linguistically, restated in other words, and thus understood otherwise, the search for their essential doctrines is in vain. What they have left behind is not what they really believed. Their work represents only sketchy illustrations of what can be done with language [...] In all of these ways, the sophists call to mind two contemporary sophist-like figures – Deleuze's nomad and de Certeau's bricoleur," Poulakos 1995: 25.

39 I will not enter deeply into the question of how Cratylus' naturalism ends up in a "parmenidean" situation in which it is impossible to utter false statements. Actually, it is Socrates himself who explicitly accuses Cratylus of asserting that it's impossible to utter the false at *Cra.*, 429 d. See for instance Barney 2003: 177, Denyer 1991: 68 and Ademollo

νῦν οὖν νόμισον τὰ πρῶτα τῶν ἱερῶν ἀκούειν τῶν σοφιστικῶν. πρῶτον γάρ, ὥς φησι Πρόδικος, περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος μαθεῖν δεῖ: ὃ δὴ καὶ ἐνδείκνυσθόν σοι τὼ ξένω, ὅτι οὐκ ᾔδησθα τὸ μανθάνειν ὅτι οἱ ἄνθρωποι καλοῦσι μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ τοιῷδε, ὅταν τις ἐξ ἀρχῆς μηδεμίαν ἔχων ἐπιστήμην περὶ πράγματός τινος ἔπειτα ὕστερον αὐτοῦ λαμβάνῃ τὴν ἐπιστήμην, καλοῦσι δὲ ταὐτὸν τοῦτο καὶ ἐπειδὰν ἔχων ἤδη τὴν ἐπιστήμην ταύτῃ τῇ ἐπιστήμῃ ταὐτὸν τοῦτο πρᾶγμα ἐπισκοπῇ ἢ πραττόμενον ἢ λεγόμενον – μᾶλλον μὲν αὐτὸ συνιέναι καλοῦσιν ἢ μανθάνειν, ἔστι δ᾽ ὅτε καὶ μανθάνειν […] ταῦτα δὴ τῶν μαθημάτων παιδιά ἐστιν – διὸ καί φημι ἐγώ σοι τούτους προσπαίζειν.

Suppose you are listening to the first part of the sophistic mysteries. First of all, as Prodicus says, you have to learn about the correct use of words – the very point that our two visitors are making plain to you, namely, that you were unaware that learning is the name which people apply on the one hand to the case of a man who, having originally no knowledge about some matter, in course of time receives such knowledge; and on the other hand the same word is applied when, having the knowledge already, he uses that knowledge for the investigation of the same matter whether occurring in action or in speech. It is true that they tend rather to call it "understanding" than "learning," but occasionally they call it learning too; […] Such things are the sport of the sciences – and that is why I tell you these men are making game of you.[40]

This well known passage presents a number of interesting features. First of all, the choice to introduce the explanation with the phrase "sophistic mysteries" casts a peculiar light on the ambiguous character of the sophistic *mathemata*; just like magical etymological inquiry and other rhetorical practices, eristics is a matter for initiates who cannot even speak of the meaning of their learning. Second, there is the mention of Prodicus. While in Plato's *Protagoras,* Prodicus is portrayed as poor, and in the *Cratylus* he is lampooned as promoter of an expensive doctrine which provides pupils with knowledge of the correctness of names,[41] the sophist is mentioned here to introduce the deconstruction of the

2011: 326 ff, who elaborates well the parallel with the *Euthydemus*, "To begin with, Socrates speaks of Cratylus' logos (d2). It is usually thought that this means just 'what you are saying' and refers to Cratylus' last answer; I prefer to think that the logos here is rather Cratylus' whole theory of names, of course with special reference to what he has just said […] Furthermore, this interpretation perfectly suits another text, which constitutes a striking parallel to our passage. At *Euthydemus* 286 c.…"

40 See Plato, *Euthd.*, 277 e-278 b.

41 See Plato, *Cra.*, 384b.

brothers' argument on knowledge, with reference to his synonymy theory.[42] The ambiguous use of the participial *epistemon* by the brothers leads to a semantic and philosophical confusion that gives dizziness to the young interlocutors, and that's why Socrates cares to say that these kind of speeches are just fun, games, "the sport of the sciences," παιδιά.[43]

Even more interesting for the topic of my paper is the curious conclusion of the *Euthydemus*, with the mention of the anonymous listener, whom the scholarship has almost universally recognized as Plato's educational competitor, Isocrates.[44] If this is the case, why does Plato address a critique to Isocrates at the conclusion of the *Euthydemus*? In my view, the answer is once again twofold. On the one hand, given that the *Euthydemus* is a dialogue conceived as a *protreptikon* toward philosophy against the risk of *misologia* (to quote the *Phaedo*) derived from eristic trickery, we can certainly assume that the presence of Isocrates as a critical target is justified by his role as an alternative to Plato as an educator of the Greek élites;[45] on the other hand, it seems to me that this very broad explanation does not clarify why Socrates stresses the fact that the anonymous listener would be very easily cut off by Euthydemus, and also why he focuses, with a clear repetition, on the concepts of *sophia* and *aletheia*:

> οὗτοι γάρ εἰσιν μέν, ὦ Κρίτων, οὓς ἔφη Πρόδικος μεθόρια φιλοσόφου τε ἀνδρὸς καὶ πολιτικοῦ, οἴονται δ' εἶναι πάντων σοφώτατοι ἀνθρώπων, πρὸς δὲ τῷ εἶναι καὶ δοκεῖν πάνυ παρὰ πολλοῖς, ὥστε παρὰ πᾶσιν εὐδοκιμεῖν ἐμποδὼν σφίσιν εἶναι οὐδένας ἄλλους ἢ τοὺς περὶ φιλοσοφίαν ἀνθρώπους. ἡγοῦνται οὖν, ἐὰν τούτους εἰς δόξαν καταστήσωσιν μηδενὸς δοκεῖν ἀξίους εἶναι, ἀναμφισβητήτως

42 On Prodicus' figure and doctrine see also Mayhew 2011.

43 See McCabe 2013, 130–150.

44 See or instance Dušanic 1999: 1–16.

45 See for instance Poulakos 199: 83. "As Socrates explains to Polus in the *Gorgias*, even though rhetoric and sophistic do differ, they are also so similar that 'sophists and orators are jumbled up as having the same field and dealing with the same subjects, and neither can they tell what to make of each other, nor the world at large what to make of them' (465 c). Socrates repeats the same point while addressing Callicles." See also Poulakos 1997: 105, "Isocrates' rhetorical education put into practice Protagoras' vision of rhetoric as an art that could be infused with the demands of political life and could make students of rhetoric good citizens for the polis. Yet the turning of an outsider's vision into an Athenian reality proved to be infinitely more difficult than the mere implementation of a conception into practice. The Athens of Isocrates' time was qualitatively different from Athens Protagoras had witnessed and had brought to his conception of rhetoric. With the success of the democratic experiment and with the fall of the Athenian empire, the gap between political equality and social inequality became more pronounced, and the polis ceased to be regarded as an integrated entity."

ἤδη παρὰ πᾶσιν τὰ νικητήρια εἰς δόξαν οἴσεσθαι σοφίας πέρι. εἶναι μὲν γὰρ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ σφᾶς σοφωτάτους, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ἰδίοις λόγοις ὅταν ἀποληφθῶσιν, ὑπὸ τῶν ἀμφὶ Εὐθύδημον κολούεσθαι. σοφοὶ δὲ ἡγοῦνται εἶναι πάνυ – εἰκότως: μετρίως μὲν γὰρ φιλοσοφίας ἔχειν, μετρίως δὲ πολιτικῶν, πάνυ ἐξ εἰκότος λόγου – μετέχειν γὰρ ἀμφοτέρων ὅσον ἔδει, ἐκτὸς δὲ ὄντες κινδύνων καὶ ἀγώνων καρποῦσθαι τὴν σοφίαν.

They are the persons, Crito, whom Prodicus described as the border-ground between philosopher and politician, yet they fancy that they are the wisest of all mankind, and that they not merely are but are thought so by a great many people; and accordingly they feel that none but the followers of philosophy stand in the way of their universal renown. Hence they believe that, if they can reduce the latter to a status of no esteem, the prize of victory will by common consent be awarded to them, without dispute or delay, and their claim to wisdom will be won. For they consider themselves to be in very truth the wisest, but find that, when caught in private conversation, they are cut off short by Euthydemus and his set. This conceit of their wisdom is very natural, since they regard themselves as moderately versed in philosophy, and moderately too in politics, on quite reasonable grounds: for they have dipped into both as far as they needed, and, evading all risk and struggle, are content to gather the fruits of wisdom.[46]

Just like the previous text, this conclusion of the dialogue presents many interesting textual clues. The open irony with which the anonymous listener is described as half philosopher and half politician is accompanied by the focus on the wrong conception of *aletheia* and *sophia* acquisition, which seems to be the most important detail of the quote. Not only was Isocrates an educational competitor to Plato, he also presented himself as a promoter of a new communicational style and a new *language* for philosophy, conceived as a new form of *mousike* for the future governing body of the city; moreover, he habitually spoke of truth to condemn other contemporary educators' dialectics.[47] As is well known, not only Plato but Isocrates too refered implicitly to their competitors in their works, and I think that this communication between the two

46 See Plato, *Euthd.*, 305 cd.

47 See for instance the important contribution of Haskins 2004: 18. "Isocrates, then, uses *aletheia* as a goading term in order to praise or blame political action or, in other cases, to point out fruitless promises of contemporary educators. The two senses of truth remain closely connected, because for Isocrates proper rhetorical education is a training ground

of them has been underestimated. After all, Isocrates conceived himself as a teacher of a new kind of *logos*, alternative both to Plato's philosophy, and to logography and traditional élite *paideia*, and he also chose to devote himself entirely to the art of writing, with a strong refusal of public performance.[48]

It seems that both Isocrates and Plato referred to each other in many different contexts, and even, in the case of Isocrates, in a court context where the reference to Socrates was explicit, as is clearly shown by the parallel passages of the *Apology* and Isocrates' *Antidosis*:

> ἔχει γὰρ οὑτωσί. νῦν ἐγὼ πρῶτον ἐπὶ δικαστήριον ἀναβέβηκα, ἔτη γεγονὼς ἑβδομήκοντα: ἀτεχνῶς οὖν ξένως ἔχω τῆς ἐνθάδε λέξεως.[49]

> ὁρᾷ γὰρ ὑμᾶς μὲν λίαν ταχέως ἀποδεχομένους τὰς αἰτίας καὶ τὰς διαβολάς, ἐμὲ δ' ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν οὐ δυνησόμενον ἀξίως τῆς δόξης ἀπολογήσασθαι καὶ διὰ τὸ γῆρας καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀπειρίαν τῶν τοιούτων ἀγώνων.[50]

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for citizenly conduct. This is why, I believe, he resists the *technai* of literate teachers of eloquence and chooses to pursue prose writing as a primary vehicle of his education and politics."

48 *Ibidem*, 19. "By abandoning the traditional venues of public performance for writing, Isocrates attempts to foster a different type of democratic rhetoric, which he terms *logos politikos*. Such a rhetoric, observes Poulakos 1997" "was an indistinguishably ethical and political art for it combined both *eu legein* (the art of speaking well) and *phronein* (prudential thinking) for the benefit of the polis […] To distinguish his art from both these functions, Isocrates attacks logography (ghosted speechwriting) and the intellectual exercise of the literate élites. To Isocrates, the former is contemptible because it is an instrument of the new politician and the litigious sycophant. The latter, though it does not promote unscrupulous quest for political power or material gain at the expense of others, is self-indulgent and often unconsequential." (68)

49 See Plato, *Ap.*, 17d. "For the fact is that this is the first time I have come before the court, although I am seventy years old; I am therefore an utter foreigner to the manner of speech here."

50 See Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 26: "for he sees that you are over ready to accept slanders and calumnies, while I, because of my age and my lack of experience of contests of this kind, shall not be able to reply to them in a manner worthy of my reputation" (transl. Norlin). On the rivalry with Plato in the *Antidosis* see Haskins 2004: 39. "Given the late date of the *Antidosis* – Isocrates was eighty two – the pamphlet was most likely written for a literate audience familiar with both Plato's and Isocrates' publications and knowledgeable about the rivalry between the two schools. If this conjecture is accurate, the first impulse is to conclude that Isocrates was explicitly comparing himself and his achievements to Socrates, the philosophical martyr par excellence […] I believe, however, that Isocrates does not wish to be seen as another Socrates, overtones of martyrdom nothwithstanding. Rather, I think that Isocrates engages in this mimetic act to amplify the intensity of the attack on his educational program."

In my own view, the presence of Isocrates in the *Euthydemus* is especially justified by the fact that the orator supported a non-philosophical version of linguistic conventionalism which would have been easily – as Socrates says – cut off by the eristic brothers. Why? And most importantly, are we entitled to attribute this kind of linguistic approach to Isocrates? To answer the first question, we might stress the fact that Isocrates chose always to write in a non-argumentative style, with a preference for epideictic and court speeches, openly dismissed by Plato as examples of useless *makrologia*. To Isocrates' mind, as we read in the *Antidosis*, wisdom is something we can achieve by habit, not through philosophical dialogue and argumentative gymnastics, but rather through continuous effort in performing *eu prattein* and *eu legein* as political and rhetorical practices respectively.[51] In this, Isocrates shows his familiarity with some typical features of old sophistry, even if we may not consider him simply as a second-generation sophist, given his selective approval of rhetorical practices.[52] On the topic of wisdom, seen as a goal to be achieved in practice, through performative rather than deliberative behaviour – a position that suggests an affinity with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*[53] – we should link the topic of the Isocratean reinterpretation of the concept of *aletheia* to *philosophia* itself, a concept about which, as has been suggested also by Nehamas (according to whom Isocrates conceived philosophy as "the ability to speak well, which in turn reflects and is the product of thinking well and shrewdly about practical affairs"), Plato and the competitor communicated with each

51 See Haskins 2004: 41. "Wisdom (*sophia*) for Isocrates is neither a divine gift nor a scientifically precise art. Rather, it is an intelligence acquired through habituation and trial by concrete circumstances […] In putting *eu prattein* and *eu legein* – acting well and speaking well – on the same level, Isocrates affirms the continuity between the traditional poetic education (*mousike*) and the philosophical program of his school."

52 See Poulakos 1995: 113. "Compared to Plato's reception, Isocrates' is more complicated. Unlike Plato, who rejected sophistical rhetoric in its entirety and sought to replace it with his dialectic, Isocrates denounced only some of the sophists' rhetorical practices and approved others. The result of this mixed response was not an alternative to but a new version of rhetoric, one that left several premises of the sophistical tradition intact while challenging some of its methods and results. Accordingly, commentators who focus on Isocrates' approval of the Sophists have understandably construed him as a second-generation sophist."

53 As suggested by Schwarze 1999, who attempts to establish links between Isocrates' *Helen* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. See for instance p. 78 and ff ("*Helen* offers a lens through which we can reexamine Aristotle's subsequent theorization of *phronesis* […] At one level *Helen* mirrors Aristotle's later theorization of the role of reason in *phronesis*. At a second level, *Helen* reflects Aristotle's articulation of the role of desire in *phronesis* […] *Helen* challenges an Aristotelian theory of *phronesis* by enacting a performative, rather than strictly deliberative, version of *phronesis*").

other.[54] To answer the second question, we have to undertake a much more difficult inquiry, and we might want to reconsider – with regard to the topic of language and conventionalism – the distance between Isocrates and Plato, usually considered unequivocal.[55] What I mean here is that both Isocrates and Plato are aware of the fact that after the cultural rupture of sophistry, language and names could not be used as always true and necessary, transparent instruments of knowledge; part of their effort is actually devoted to establishing a new way to use the Greek language for teaching and learning, as I have already claimed in the case of Plato's critique of Hermogenes' conservatism in the *Cratylus.*[56] Both Plato and Isocrates meant to rebuild a philosophically sound language, but they differed radically in the meanings they attributed to key concepts such as – as I have already said – truth, wisdom, philosophy, figure of speech, forms, and ideas. Obviously I am not suggesting that the only, or the main, difference between the two consists in their different conceiving these issues – as is clear, they differed about a number of things, including the method of teaching, the content of teaching, the aim of education, and also the use of rhetorical skills such as persuasion and re-reading myths[57] – but rather that a combined analysis of both Plato's and Isocrates' dialogues and speeches in light of the semantic ambiguity of the philosophical key concepts of both is possible. I shall offer some examples to explain my point. It could be useful to start with two quotes taken from Isocrates *On Peace* and *To Philip* respectively:

54 See Nehamas 1990.

55 See Poulakos 1995: 115. "There are as many similarities between Isocrates and Plato as there are differences. Both he and Plato stayed away from active politics, although for apparently different reasons. Each headed a school, although what they taught differed significantly. Both were Athenians of means, but their attitudes toward the age of Pericles and their proposed solutions for Athens' problems were not exactly identical. Both were concerned with the state of politics and education, although Plato's approach was more theoretical and Isocrates' more practical."

56 See page 3.

57 On the use of persuasion in analogy with Plato's *Phaedrus,* see for instance Poulakos 1997, 55 ff. "As seen in the last chapter, Isocrates made use of erotic discourse to acknowledge and expose the manipulative side of persuasion. In this, he showed cognizance of a traditional invocation to eros to express the power of persuasion along the lines of a seductive force that works by capturing the will of hearers and by rendering them indefensible to the will of the aggressor. This explains the traditional portrayal of the effect of persuasion on the mind of the hearer in terms parallel to the effect of eros on the soul of the beloved: at once the creation of *tarache* and the persuasive use of *tarache* to gain unfair advantage." On the topic of eros, persuasion, and politics, see the brilliant Ludwig 2006.

πολλῶν δὲ καὶ καλῶν λόγων ἐνόντων περὶ τὴν ὑπόθεσιν ταύτην, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀμφότερα συμβουλεύει παύσασθαι λέγοντι, καὶ τὸ μῆκος τοῦ λόγου καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἐτῶν τῶν ἐμῶν: τοῖς δὲ νεωτέροις καὶ μᾶλλον ἀκμάζουσιν ἢ ἐγὼ παραινῶ καὶ παρακελεύομαι τοιαῦτα καὶ λέγειν καὶ γράφειν, ἐξ ὧν τὰς μεγίστας τῶν πόλεων καὶ τὰς εἰθισμένας ταῖς ἄλλαις κακὰ παρέχειν προτρέψουσιν ἐπ᾽ ἀρετὴν καὶ δικαιοσύνην, ὡς ἐν ταῖς τῆς Ἑλλάδος εὐπραγίαις συμβαίνει καὶ τὰ τῶν φιλοσόφων πράγματα πολλῷ βελτίω γίγνεσθαι.[58]

οὕτω δ᾽ ἂν ἀκριβέστατα καὶ κάλλιστα θεωρήσειας εἴ τι τυγχάνομεν λέγοντες, ἢν τὰς μὲν δυσχερείας τὰς περὶ τοὺς σοφιστὰς καὶ τοὺς ἀναγιγνωσκομένους τῶν λόγων ἀφέλῃς, ἀναλαμβάνων δ᾽ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν ἐξετάζῃς, μὴ πάρεργον ποιούμενος μηδὲ μετὰ ῥᾳθυμίας, ἀλλὰ μετὰ λογισμοῦ καὶ φιλοσοφίας, ἧς καὶ σὲ μετεσχηκέναι φασίν.[59]

In the first quote, Isocrates is inviting young people to engage in study and politics and to contribute to the life of the country for a prosperous future, symbolized by the flourishing of τῶν φιλοσόφων πράγματα, which Norlin translates as the "state of learning and letters," and which reminds me of the expression φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας in Thucydides' Pericles speech. In the second quote, the notion appears once again in a more speculative context;[60] the choice of the specific words διάνοια, λογισμός and φιλοσοφία can hardly be random, and I would go so far as to consider it an open, critical reference to Plato, especially because διάνοια stands here precisely for a mental discursive faculty as it often does in Plato, while λογισμός is used in the broad sense of reasoning. As Ekaterina Haskins noticed, Isocrates promoted also, in his *Antidosis*, an anti-Platonic theory of knowledge, in a certain sense overturning

58 See Isocrates, *On Peace*, 145. "My subject is not exhausted; there are many excellent things to be said upon it, but I am prompted by two considerations to stop speaking: the length of my discourse and the number of my years. But I urge and exhort those who are younger and more vigorous than I to speak and write the kind of discourses by which they will turn the greatest states – those which have been wont to oppress the rest – into the paths of virtue and justice, since when the affairs of Hellas are in a happy and prosperous condition, it follows that the state of learning and letters also is greatly improved" (transl. Norlin).

59 See Isocrates, *To Philip*, 29. "But you will be in the best position to discover with accuracy whether there is any truth in what I say if you put aside the prejudices which are held against the sophists and against speeches which are composed to be read, and take them up one by one in your thought and scrutinize them, not making it a casual task, nor one to be attacked in a spirit of indifference, but with the close reasoning and love of knowledge which it is common report that you also share" (transl. Norlin).

60 See for instance Timmermann 1998: 145–159.

Plato's line's metaphor in the *Republic*, and other Platonic accounts of epistemology.[61] Curiously enough, Isocrates is defending here the quality of written speeches performed by "sophists," again in an open competition with Plato's critique of writing.[62] And speaking of the critique of writing, we may refer to the *Phaedrus* as a Platonic dialogue where the implicit reference to Isocrates appears particularly strong; it is at *Phdr.*, 266 c and following, where Plato is referring to the old sophists "Tisias and Gorgias," that his words echo explicitly Isocrates' *Panegyricus* (8) but also, as stressed for instance by Jeffrey Walker, *Helen* (13), *Busiris* (4) and *Panathenaicus* (36). Indeed, the Socratic line which describes the ability of sophistic *technai* to "make small things seem great, and great things small by the power of speech" is openly a reference to the aforementioned Isocratean works, as testified by Plutarch as well, in his *Life of Isocrates*, 838 ff.[63] Among the technical terms shared by Plato and Isocrates, the most striking one is, in my view, the feminine ἰδέα. *Idea* is used repeatedly in Isocrates without any ontological or metaphysical connotations, but rather as a professional notion of "figure/form of speech," "type of composition," as is evident, for example, in this occurence of *Panathenaicus*, 2:

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61 See Collins Edwards 2010: 377. "In her recent book, Ekaterina Haskins argues persuasively that Isocrates, in his *Antidosis*, inverts Plato's epistemological hierarchy in order to counter the Academy's attack on his educational program. He assigns *doxa*, opinion or judgement, a higher status than *episteme*, certain knowledge (181–184), and theoretical studies a merely preparatory role for philosophy in the true sense, which is *logon paideia*, or 'discursive education' (262–266), and its realization in moral action. And although Isocrates models his defense of his own paideia on Plato's *Apology*, Haskins argues that Isocrates does not wish to be seen as anything like Socrates. Rather, Isocrates' imitation of the *Apology* elucidates the contrast between his philosophy and that of Plato. *Against the Sophists*, Isocrates' earlier advertisement of his program, has singled out other rival educators for criticism, but by the time of the *Antidosis*, Isocrates is focused on the Academy, to the extent that the speech's diction is strategically chosen to answer Plato."

62 See for instance Howland 1937: 151–159.

63 See Walker 2011: 63. "It has long been argued, persuasively I think, that the *Phaedrus*, like the *Gorgias*, is a thinly veiled critique of Isocrates. That Isocrates is the target in the *Phaedrus*'s representation of the typical contents of sophistic technai is pointedly made clear by the reference to 'Tisias and Gorgias' who 'make small things seem great, and great things small, by the power of speech, and new things old, and old things the reverse, and who discovered speaking briefly and at endless lenght on all subjects' (267a–b). Gorgias reputedly taught Isocrates (and Tisias Gorgias), though modern scholarship doubts the connection; the story may mean little more than that Isocrates studied Gorgias' writing, or was the recipient of a teaching descended from Gorgias. But there is a stronger link than filiation. The passage clearly is a deliberate echo (though not an exact quote) of an Isocratean precept that finds its fullest extant statement in the *Panegyricus* (8)…"

> ἀλλὰ πάντας τούτους ἐάσας περὶ ἐκείνους ἐπραγματευόμην, τοὺς περὶ τῶν συμφερόντων τῇ τε πόλει καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἕλλησι συμβουλεύοντας, καὶ πολλῶν μὲν ἐνθυμημάτων γέμοντας, οὐκ ὀλίγων δ᾽ ἀντιθέσεων καὶ παρισώσεων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἰδεῶν τῶν ἐν ταῖς ῥητορείαις διαλαμπουσῶν καὶ τοὺς ἀκούοντας ἐπισημαίνεσθαι καὶ θορυβεῖν ἀναγκαζουσῶν.
>
> Now, I left all these to others and devoted my own efforts to giving advice on the true interests of Athens and of the rest of the Hellenes, writing in a style rich in many telling points, in contrasted and balanced phrases not a few, and in the other figures of speech which give brilliance to oratory and compel the approbation and applause of the audience.[64]

To mark more radically his difference from Plato, Isocrates makes use of this word to address the idea of an element of aesthetic beauty, something completely formal and alien to any philosophical concern.[65] That ἰδέα can be considered one of the most important of Isocratean technical terms is also supported by the fact that the word appears a number of times (nineteen) along with εἶδος (four) which is used as a synonym. It seems to me fairly clear that the choice of this notion can hardly be accidental, given its crucial importance and huge presence in the Platonic dialogues, knowledge of which Isocrates didn't avoid demonstrating in his own speeches, although there's no general agreement among the commentators on the precise meaning of the term in Isocrates. As suggested by Sullivan in his acute inquiry on the topic, we can summarize the occurrences of ἰδέα in four clusters of meaning, namely those of "forms as the categories of discourse" (*Antidosis*, *Busiris*, *Panegyricus*, *Against the Sophists*), "forms as the materials from which discourses are made" (*Evagoras*), "structures" (*Antidosis*, *To Philip*, *Helen*), and "elements" (*Against the Sophists*).[66] The occurrence of ἰδέα in *Against the Sophists*, 12–14 is especially meaningful for the contrast highlighted by Isocrates between learning the letters of the alphabet, which are fixed conventional tags for single sounds and then words, and the elements of discourse, ἰδέαι, which have to be employed

64 See Isocrates, *Panathenaicus*, 2 (transl. Norlin).

65 See Collins Edwards 2010: 399. "The particular case of *mimesis* seems analogous to another term that occupies a rung in both Isocrates' and Plato's epistemological hierarchies, *idea*. […] Isocrates is likely to have constructed his epistemological framework and the pedagogical method based on it without requiring the inspiration of Plato."

66 See the interesting paper of Sullivan 2001: 79–92.

skillfully (with “imaginative mind”) to mix different parts of speech in order to speak rhytmically.[67]

> θαυμάζω δ᾽ ὅταν ἴδω τούτους μαθητῶν ἀξιουμένους, οἳ ποιητικοῦ πράγματος τεταγμένην τέχνην παράδειγμα φέροντες λελήθασι σφᾶς αὐτούς. τίς γὰρ οὐκ οἶδε πλὴν τούτων ὅτι τὸ μὲν τῶν γραμμάτων ἀκινήτως ἔχει καὶ μένει κατὰ ταὐτόν, ὥστε τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀεὶ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν χρώμενοι διατελοῦμεν, τὸ δὲ τῶν λόγων πᾶν τοὐναντίον πέπονθεν: τὸ γὰρ ὑφ᾽ ἑτέρου ῥηθὲν τῷ λέγοντι μετ᾽ ἐκεῖνον οὐχ ὁμοίως χρήσιμόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ᾽ οὗτος εἶναι δοκεῖ τεχνικώτατος, ὅς τις ἂν ἀξίως μὲν λέγῃ τῶν πραγμάτων, μηδὲν δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν τοῖς ἄλλοις εὑρίσκειν δύνηται.[68]

I find especially interesting – in light of a certain conventional conception of language and meaning – that Isocrates is considering here the letters as conventional icons for sounds, which are to be used in a fixed, unproblematic way, and which don’t act as means to indicate the specific meaning of the words they compose.

Therefore it seems to me clear that both Plato and his competitor attempted to develop a new way of using the Greek language. They aimed to establish different levels of communication, and to assume a conventionalist view of the linguistic *medium*. Indeed, this attempt shows itself as completely different from the dense way of speaking of the poetical tradition which is shared even by some Presocratic philosophers.[69] However, while Isocrates does not deploy any ontological distinction among levels of reality and does not seem concerned about the role of *logos* in defining or grasping them, Plato takes care to find a constructive and meaningful way to use the defective human language for his own account of education and, most importantly, for the moral improvement of the citizens actively engaged in politics.

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67 See Isocrates, *Contra Sph.*, 12–16.

68 *Ibidem* (12). “But I marvel when I observe these men setting themselves up as instructors of youth who cannot see that they are applying the analogy of an art with hard and fast rules to a creative process. For, excepting these teachers, who does not know that the art of using letters remains fixed and unchanged, so that we continually and invariably use the same letters for the same purposes, while exactly the reverse is true of the art of discourse? For what has been said by one speaker is not equally useful for the speaker who comes after him; on the contrary, he is accounted most skilled in this art who speaks in a manner worthy of his subject and yet is able to discover in it topics which are nowise the same as those used by others” (trans. Norlin).

69 The reference goes especially to Heraclitus (for whom Kahn 1979 coined the definition of linguistic density).

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CHAPTER 10

Aristotle's Method of Inquiry in *Eudemian Ethics* 1 and 2

*Andrea Falcon**

Abstract

Bridging the gap between ethics and science has emerged as an important concern in the most recent research on Aristotle. In this essay, I contribute to the ongoing discussion with a study of the method of inquiry adopted in *Eudemian Ethics* (EE) 1–2. In a nutshell, this method entails the progressive clarification of what is initially confounded (rather than confused). The obvious question is whether, and eventually to what extent, the method employed in the *Eudemian Ethics* reflects the procedures of scientific inquiry mandated by the *Posterior Analytics*.

My essay is divided into four main parts. I begin with an examination of the methodological remarks offered in EE 1.6. Then, I try to determine whether, and to what extent, the method that Aristotle outlines in this chapter controls the overall argument advanced in the first two books of the *Eudemian Ethics*. I argue that both the investigation of happiness and that of virtue of character are conducted by adopting the method of progressive clarification of what is initially confounded. That is not surprising, especially considering that the second investigation is a natural, and indeed inevitable, continuation of the first. In the third part, I turn to *Physics* I. I show that there are some striking similarities between EE 1–2 and in *Physics* I. In both cases, Aristotle is engaged in a progressive clarification of something that is initially confounded. There are also some obvious differences. While in EE 1–2 Aristotle is engaged in a search for an answer to a τί ἐστι question, there is no concern for definition in *Physics* I. With this conclusion in place, I finally turn to the nature of the method adopted in EE 1–2. This method has been described as being quasi-mathematical (Allen 1961) or endoxic (Devereux 2015). By my lights, the method adopted in the first two books of the *Eudemian*

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Ethics does not reflect the procedures outlined in the *Topics* but rather those sketched in the second book of the *Posterior Analytics*.

My paper fits well with recent attempts to see whether, and to what extent, the ethical investigation follows the theory of scientific inquiry outlined in second book of the *Posterior Analytics* (most notably, Natali 2010, Natali 2015, and Natali 2017). These attempts have focused on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I am persuaded that the *Eudemian Ethics* is a more promising case study.

1 Introduction

Bridging the gap between ethics and science has emerged as an important concern in the most recent research on Aristotle. I have in mind especially the volume of essays edited by Devin Henry and Karen Margrethe Nielsen.[1] I would like to contribute to this ongoing discussion with a study of the method of inquiry adopted in *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) 1 and 2. In a nutshell, this method entails the progressive clarification of what is initially confounded. This method shows striking similarities with the one first outlined and then adopted in *Physics* 1. At least in the *EE*, however, the procedure of progressive clarification of what is initially confounded is introduced in the context of the search for an answer to a τί ἐστι question: What is happiness? Every τί ἐστι question calls for a definition. Our τί ἐστι question is no exception: the τί ἐστι question about happiness is asking for a definition of the nature of happiness and not for one thing or a list of things that taken together are to be identified with the human good. It is telling that the final answer to this question is capped by saying that the genus (γένος) and the definition (ὅρος) of happiness have been established.[2] If we approach the τί ἐστι question about happiness as a request for a definition, it becomes natural to ask whether, and eventually to what extent, the method employed in the *EE* reflects the procedures of inquiry mandated by the *Posterior Analytics.*

My essay fits well with recent attempts to see whether, and to what extent, the ethical investigation follows the theory of scientific inquiry outlined in second book of the *Posterior Analytics*. These attempts have focused on the *Nicomachean Ethics.*[3] I believe that the *Eudemian Ethics* is a more promising case study. If I am successful, I will establish that there is methodological unity between ethical and scientific investigations, and that some version of the inquiry outlined in the second book of the *Posterior Analytics* is at work in the

1 See Henry and Nilsen 2015.
2 *EE* 2.1, 1219a39–40.
3 Natali 2010; Natali 2015; and, most recently, Natali 2017. See also Charles 2015.

EE. Still, methodological unity is a relatively weak form of unity. I am not advocating any stronger form of unity. By my lights, ethics and science remain distinct and autonomous projects.[4]

2 The Methodological Passage in *Eudemian Ethics* 1.6

EE 1.1–6 is a fairly long and complex proemium.[5] In this stretch of text, Aristotle's overriding preoccupation is to introduce the main topic of the treatise and to give a first idea of what is to be accomplished in the investigation that lies ahead. For our understanding of the overall argument of the *EE*, the most important part of the proemium is the methodological passage in *EE* 1.6. Aristotle's immediate concern is to explain how the argument will proceed in the subsequent investigation. Here is the passage in the Walzer-Mingay edition:

> πειρατέον δὲ περὶ πάντων τούτων ζητεῖν τὴν πίστιν διὰ τῶν λόγων, μαρτυρίοις καὶ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον τοῖς φαινομένοις […] ἔχει γὰρ ἕκαστος οἰκεῖόν

4 The method of inquiry adopted in *EE* 1–2 (hereafter "the Eudemian method") is not uncharted territory. This method was first studied in a seminal paper by D.J. Allan, who famously argued that Aristotle employs a "quasi-mathematical method" in the *EE*. Cf. Allan 1961. For a recent, critical discussion of Allan's paper, I refer the reader to Karbowski 2014. Two more essays have recently appeared on the Eudemian method. They take different starting points and advocate mutually exclusive readings of the Eudemian method. Devereux 2015 takes his lead from the methodological passage that opens the discussion of incontinence in *EE* 6.1 (= *NE* 7.1). On this reading, the Eudemian method is an endoxic method, which is a dialectical method but should not be confused with dialectic. By contrast, Karbowski 2015 considers *EE* 1.6 to be the most important piece of evidence for the Eudemian method. By his lights, the Eudemian method is not an endoxic method. Karbowski 2015 is programmatically focused on establishing what the Eudemian method is not. As a result of this rather narrow focus, it is difficult to tell whether there is agreement between the positive view I develop in this essay and the outline of the Eudemian method sketched at the very end of Karbowski 2015. What is clear, however, is that I share the same starting point as Karbowski 2015. I, too, think that any discussion of the Eudemian method must begin with a close study of *EE* 1.6. In this passage, Aristotle is not centrally concerned with establishing the truth of the *endoxa*. Rather, he outlines a different task for the investigator of ethical matters. More on this shortly. For the time being, I would like to recall the recent, in-depth and very helpful, discussion of the endoxic method offered in Frede 2012. This discussion shows that the endoxic method is far from being an especially clear, or even paradigmatic, illustration of the method adopted in all ethical matters. On the contrary, it is rarely used outside the discussion of incontinence. Moreover, there are special reasons why Aristotle deploys it there. I take this article to be a secure basis for a fresh look at the evidence for the Eudemian method in *EE* 1.6.

5 Cf. Aristotle's choice of the verb προοιμιάζεσθαι ("to say by way of prelude, preamble") at the outset of our Chapter 7 (1217a18). On *EE* 1.1–6 as a premium for the whole investigation, see Gigon 1971. I speak of "our Chapter 7" because the chapter division in the *EE* and elsewhere is a convention that captures Aristotle's argumentative strategy only to a point.

> τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐξ ὧν ἀναγκαῖον δεικνύναι πως περὶ αὐτῶν· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς δέ, προϊοῦσιν ἔσται καὶ τὸ σαφῶς, μεταλαμβάνουσιν ἀεὶ τὰ γνωριμώτερα τῶν εἰωθότων λέγεσθαι συγκεχυμένως.
>
> *EE* 1.6, 1216b26–35

Here are three recent English translations of this passage:

> Kenny 2011: "about all these matters we must seek conviction through argument, using people's perceptions as evidence and example […] everyone has something of their own to contribute to the truth, and we must start our proofs from such points. If we begin with things that are said in a manner that is true but unenlightening, we shall make progress toward enlightenment constantly substituting more perspicuous expressions for ones that are more familiar but confused."
>
> Inwood-Woolf 2013: "in all these matters we must try to seek conviction through argument, using the appearances as witnesses and examples […] each person has some affinity with the truth, and it is from this that one must prove one's case on these issues in one way or another. If we start from what is truly but not clearly spoken, clarity will be won as we make progress, continually substituting what is more intelligible for what is usually spoken of confusedly."
>
> Simpson 2013: "the attempt to seek out something one can trust in all these matters must be done through arguments with the phenomena used as evidence and example […] each of us has some familiarity with the truth, and this must be the source for in some way showing how things are. For from what is said truly but not clearly, we will, as we go forward, also get clarity if we always exchange better known things for the confusions that are usually said."

In all three translations, Aristotle speaks of the investigation that lies ahead of us as an epistemic progression from what is said truly but unclearly to what is clear. The end-point of this investigation is epistemic clarity, which is secured by constantly replacing what is usually said in a confounded way with what is better known. Our passage does not say much else on the end-point of the investigation. From the proemium, however, we know that we are about to launch into this investigation because we want an answer to a τί ἐστι question. More directly, we want to know what happiness is. In light of this, it is safe to conclude that our investigation will end when we have reached a definition of happiness. This definition must be maximally clear in the sense that all the elements or parts of the definition must be adequately unpacked and explained. Hence, we can provisionally conceive of our task as

that of identifying the key elements or parts of a definition in order to clarify them as appropriate. We will see how Aristotle executes the task that he has outlined in the methodological passage shortly. In the meantime, I hasten to add that reaching a definition of happiness that is maximally clear is not the only goal of the investigation that lies ahead of us. Quite the opposite: Aristotle is very clear that we not only want to know what happiness and virtue are but also want to become happy and virtuous.[6] Still, in the pages to follow, I will concentrate on the cognitive goal to the exclusion of the other stated goal of the investigation.[7]

I have already anticipated that the method of inquiry outlined in *EE* 1.6 consists in a progressive clarification of what is initially confounded. I say "confounded" instead of "confused" because the epistemic starting point need not be a state of psychological confusion.[8] We may be confused and, because of that confusion, make contradictory claims. But there is no evidence that Aristotle conceives of his task as that of sorting out contradictory statements on the topic of happiness. At least in the *EE*, his task is not that of adjudicating between competing views on the topic of happiness. Aristotle does not start from a disagreement, true or apparent, on the topic of happiness. Rather, he starts from a statement that he thinks is true but unclear. Moreover, there is no evidence that Aristotle conceives of his task as that of clearing up a fuzzy or vague statement. He thinks that this statement is in need of a great deal of unpacking because there is a complexity in it that is to be brought to light and articulated. In light of this, I prefer to speak of the starting point of our investigation as a state of confoundedness rather than a state of confusion.

Aristotle refers to this starting point with the Greek expression τὰ φαινόμενα. The φαινόμενα in question are λεγόμενα. The shift from φαινόμενα to λεγόμενα is something that G.E.L. Owen noted many years ago.[9] However, we must be very careful here: our λεγόμενα are true yet unclear statements. This means that our starting points are not treated as mere opinions. An opinion – even a reputable one – may be false. By contrast, our λεγόμενα must be true. A consequence of this is that we cannot conceive of our ethical investigation as an attempt to establish the truth of our different and often conflicting opinions about happiness. If we take this view, we fail to do justice to how Aristotle envisions epistemic progress in the methodological passage. Aristotle does not

6 *EE* 1.1, 1214a14–15.
7 I am adopting the language suggested in Salmieri 2009: 315.
8 *Pace* the three translations reported above.
9 Owen 1961: 83–103.

envision the task ahead of us as that of establishing the truth, or bringing out the truth. Rather, he envisions epistemic progress as a movement from something that is objectively true but stated in an unclear way to something that is objectively true and stated in a clear way. We would like to hear more from Aristotle on how we as reflective agents have access to this objective state that is the starting point of our investigation. It is unfortunate that he does not spell this out for us. Still, it is important to stress that having access to the objective state from the start does not mean that our investigation is going to be easy. A number of things can go wrong and arriving at epistemic clarity is anything but a foregone conclusion.

Additional evidence that the φαινόμενα/λεγόμενα are authoritative ethical facts comes from what Aristotle says immediately after our methodological passage. He goes on to add that a philosophical investigation consists in searching for a causal explanation of the relevant facts. Apparently, our present investigation (μέθοδος) is no exception. Here too it is not sufficient to know *that* something is the case, but we want to know *why* something is the case. This entails finding an answer to the question διὰ τί. Interestingly enough, Aristotle adds that this requires particular caution. Our causal explanations might be empty or inappropriate to the subject matter. Moreover, we may be able to prove something that is true by means of a false demonstration. In light of this, it is a good practice to keep the facts apart from their explanation, and we should pay attention, first and foremost, to the φαινόμενα. Clearly, Aristotle regards these φαινόμενα as authoritative ethical facts.

This aspect of the φαινόμενα may be lost if we render the Greek with "appearances" (Woolf-Inwood) or with "perceptions" (Kenny). The first rendering suggests that progress consists in replacing what appears to be the case with what is in fact the case. There is no evidence that Aristotle envisions this kind of epistemic progression. Rather, he thinks that the relevant progression consists in moving from what is true yet unclear to what is true and clear. In our methodological passage, he is forthcoming on his reason for adopting this particular procedure: each person has some affinity or familiarity with the truth (ἕκαστος οἰκεῖόν τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν). Let us turn to the second rendering. There is no doubt that the starting point of our investigation must reflect our experience as ethical agents. But the rendering of φαινόμενα as "perceptions" suggests a subjective starting point. Kenny has Aristotle say that everyone has something of his or her own to contribute to the truth. This translation of ἕκαστος οἰκεῖόν τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν reinforces the impression that epistemic progression consists in moving from a subjective starting point to an objective (or intersubjective) end-point. But there is

really no evidence that this is how Aristotle envisions epistemic progression in the *EE*.[10]

3 Searching for the τί ἐστι of Happiness

With the methodological passage in place, Aristotle turns to the actual argument of the *EE*. The argument begins with the following words:

> λέγωμεν ἀρξάμενοι πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, οὐ σαφῶς λεγομένων, ζητοῦντες †ἐπὶ τὸ† σαφῶς εὑρεῖν τί ἐστιν ἡ εὐδαιμονία.
>
> *EE* 1.7, 1217a18–21

The most recent English translations of this passage are:

> Kenny 2011: "Let us begin our discussion by starting as we said from the first, unclarified, opinions, and seek then to gain a clear view of what happiness is."
>
> Inwood-Woolf 2013: "Let us begin as we said first things first, from what is not clearly stated, looking subsequently to discover clearly what happiness is."
>
> Simpson 2013: "Let us speak beginning first from what is said first but as we stated not clearly, seeking after a clear discovery of what happiness is."

Both Kenny and Inwood-Woolf accept the emendation ἔπειτα for †ἐπὶ τὸ†. If we accept this emendation, we are dealing with a two-stage process in which we first lay down the authoritative facts that are said in a true but unclear way and then engage in a search for their explanation. In other words, the emendation makes the connection with the methodological passage even more obvious. Simpson seems to think that the transmitted text need not be corrupted. But there is no real disagreement on the overall interpretation of the passage.

10 In an endnote to his translation, Kenny adds: "'Perception renders the Greek word '*phainomena*', which, like it, can mean either sense-perceptions or opinions. The context here and in similar passages in Aristotle makes clear that the latter is what he has in mind" (151n28). But if this is what the relevant φαινόμενα are, it becomes difficult to see epistemic progress as going from true but unclear statements to true and clear statements.

On all three translations, Aristotle is consciously adopting language that is reminiscent of the methodological passage advanced in *EE* 1.6. In this way, he signals that he will adopt the methodology outlined in the previous passage. Both the starting point and the end-point of our investigation are clearly stated. The starting point is a statement that is not clear. The end-point is the discovery of the definition of happiness. The goal is to spell out, in a clear way (σαφῶς), what happiness is. We have already seen that Aristotle conceives of this epistemic movement as a case of progressive clarification. The investigation ends when we have reached what is maximally clear. The use of the stock phrase πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων reinforces the idea that we are dealing with *an inquiry that unfolds in stages*. At least this is how this phrase, which is frequently found at the outset of an inquiry,[11] is taken in the three translations above: we are dealing with an investigation in which the first stage consists in laying down the initial statement that is in need of progressive clarification.[12]

Let us see now how Aristotle follows through with his plan in the next sentence, which is also his initial move in the search for the τί ἐστι of happiness: "now, it is generally agreed that it [= happiness] is the greatest and the best of the human goods."[13] We start from what is generally agreed (ὁμολογεῖται). Yet consensus alone does not suffice to establish the starting point of our investigation. We start from what is generally agreed *because it is true*. Admittedly, this is not said *expressis verbis*, but it is mandated by the methodological passage. We have no choice but to read this into our passage if we really think that that Aristotle is consciously adopting the method of inquiry outlined in *EE* 1.6. In other words, it is by reflecting on what is not simply regarded as true but is in fact true that we have an initial grasp of the object of our search.

We should not underestimate how important this initial move is. If we make a mistake at the beginning, our whole investigation is bound to fail as it consists in articulating or unpacking what was stated at the beginning. Hence, success in our inquiry is contingent upon finding the right starting point. One thing is pretty clear about Aristotle's starting point: we are looking for something that is distinctively human (as opposed to something that is shared with gods or beasts). We have not only a name for it, happiness, but also an initial

11 Cf. *Generation of Animals* 2.4, 737b25–27; *Parts of Animals* 1.5, 646a4; *Parts of Animals* 2.10, 655b28–29, *On the Senses* 1, 436a6.

12 This is what the phrase "first what is first" is taken to mean in all three translations.

13 *EE* 1.7, 1217a21–22: ὁμολογεῖται δὴ μέγιστον εἶναι καὶ ἄριστον τοῦτο τῶν ἀγαθῶν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων. I adopted the translation offered in Kenny 2011.

definition. Admittedly, the definition provides very little information. Still, it is consequential in orienting the subsequent research:

> Initial Definition: happiness is the greatest and the best of the human goods.

What follows in the rest of the first book is a careful analysis of the initial definition. As anticipated in the methodological passage, our strategy consists in focusing on parts of this definition in order to replace what is confounded with what is clear. This procedure will generate some *interim* results. For instance, we can detect the following, interim definition of happiness:

> *Interim* definition: happiness is the chief good among the things achievable by human beings.[14]

We reach this definition by means of the method of division. More directly, we need to distinguish between *what is achievable by human beings* (what is within the scope of human action) and what is not. Within what is achievable by human beings (what is within the scope of human action), a further distinction is made between an end and what is done for the sake of an end. There is no doubt that this first definition marks important progress in our analysis of happiness. Still, we are far from having reached a maximally clear definition. By "maximally clear," I mean a definition that is clear in all its elements or parts. Therefore, the next move is to clarify this first *interim* definition by focusing on a specific part of it.

This time the focus is on the chief good (τὸ ἄριστον). We want to establish what the chief good is. Aristotle is forthcoming on this point: "we must inquire what this chief good is, and in how many senses the expression is used."[15] Now, we are confronted with different opinions (δόξαι) on the nature of the chief good. One view is that it is the Good Itself or the Idea of the Good. Another is that it is the common good, which is to say some universal property (whatever it may be) that everything that is good shares. What follows is a brief discussion and refutation of these two views. A number of things are interesting about the overall argumentative strategy adopted in this stretch of text. For one, we are still in the business of searching for a definition of happiness and

14 *EE* 1.7, 1217a40–41: δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπῳ πρακτῶν ἄριστον θετέον. I adopt the translation offered in Kenny 2011.

15 *EE* 1.8, 1217b1–2: σκεπτέον τοίνυν τί τὸ ἄριστον, καὶ λέγεται ποσαχῶς. I adopt the translation given in Kenny 2011.

we pursue this goal by introducing progressive clarity to our original definition. For another, we make use of the so-called dialectic method. In fact, most of what is transmitted as Chapter 8 can be regarded as a refutation of the view that the chief good is the Idea of the Good (or the common good). At the outset of our investigation, Aristotle has told us that one way of proving a thesis that is contested is to refute the arguments of its opponents.[16] In fact, in many cases we may have no choice but to engage in a refutation of an alternative position. In such cases, by refuting the alternative positions we also establish our own position. This is certainly one of those cases.[17] We can make progress in our project, which remains that of progressive clarification of what is stated in a true but unclear way, only by refuting alternative views. The progressive clarification and the unpacking that is central to Aristotle's task may require engaging in a review of reputable opinions, and when we do this our investigation is hospitable to dialectical procedures.

Our refutation results in a definition of the chief good:

> The chief good defined: ["It is obvious, then, that neither the Idea of Good, nor the good that is common, is the chief good that we are looking for: for the one is unchangeable and unattainable by action; the other, while it is changeable, is not attainable by action. What really is] the chief good is the purpose in the sense of the end that is the cause of what leads to it and is the first of all goods."[18]

In the final lines of the first book of the *EE*, Aristotle explains how we should think of the end as a cause. He argues that the end is a final cause, while the things that are done for the sake of it are efficient causes in the sense that they bring about the end. Finally, he clarifies that the goal is a starting point, and as such it cannot be demonstrated. Rather, it must be assumed at the outset. At that point, our search for the τί ἐστι of happiness is not over but has reached a

16 *EE* 1.3, 1215a6–7: οἱ γὰρ τῶν ἀμφισβητούντων ἔλεγχοι τῶν ἐναντιουμένων αὐτοῖς λόγων ἀποδείξεις εἰσίν.

17 Consider, for instance, how Aristotle establishes teleology in *Physics* 2.8. Teleology is not established on independent grounds. Rather, Aristotle shows that an opponent who claims that material and efficient causes alone suffice to explain natural change fails to provide an adequate explanation of nature.

18 *EE* 1.8, 1218b7–11: φανερὸν ὅτι οὔτε ἡ ἰδέα τἀγαθοῦ τὸ ζητούμενον αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐστίν, οὔτε τὸ κοινόν (τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀκίνητον καὶ οὐ πρακτόν, τὸ δὲ κινητὸν μὲν ἀλλ᾽ οὐ πρακτόν)· τὸ δ᾽ οὗ ἕνεκα ὡς τέλος ἄριστον καὶ αἴτιον τῶν ὑφ᾽ αὐτὸ καὶ πρῶτον πάντων. I adopt (with modifications) the translation offered in Kenny 2011.

natural stop, which is confirmed with the following words: "the good is the end of human being and the best of things attainable by action: that is the object of our study. We must now inquire in how many ways this chief good is realized; that is what is best."[19]

A new beginning is announced at the outset of *EE* 2: "next we must take a new starting point and discuss what follows." Clearly, this is a new beginning *in the same investigation* as is shown by the fact that we are given an argument whose premises are grounded, at least in part, in the results reached in *EE* 1. I will not engage in a close reading of the stretch of text in which Aristotle gives us the equivalent of the so-called function argument advanced in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. What matters for our purposes is that at the end of this stretch of text we are given another definition of happiness:

> Final definition: [But happiness, as we saw, is the best of all things; consequently, happiness is the activity of a good soul. We also saw that happiness is something complete, and from this and the premises that a life can be complete or incomplete, and that virtue likewise can be total or partial, and that the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete, it follows that] happiness is the activity of complete life in accordance with complete virtue.[20]

This definition is identical with the one found in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7, 1098a16–18. Still, it should not be overlooked that in the *EE* we have reached this conclusion (a) by a progressive clarification of what is said truly but not clearly, and (b) by constantly replacing what is usually said in a confounded way with what is better known. As we have seen, these are the two key elements of the method of inquiry outlined in *EE* 1.6.

At this point, Aristotle turns to the topic of virtue (ἀρετή). Since virtue was announced as one of the topics on his agenda, this development is not unexpected. However, I would like to be as clear as possible on the following point: there is a sense in which our final definition of happiness is not yet a maximally clear definition. Quite the opposite: we still do not know what "life

19 *EE* 1.8, 1218b24–27: τὸ δ' ὡς τέλος ἀγαθὸν ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ τὸ ἄριστον τῶν πρακτῶν, σκεπτέον ποσαχῶς τὸ ἄριστον πάντων, ἐπειδὴ τοῦτο ἄριστον. This is the translation found in Kenny 2011.

20 *EE* 2.1, 1219a35–39: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦν ἡ εὐδαιμονία τέλεόν τι, καὶ ἔστι ζωὴ καὶ τελέα καὶ ἀτελής, καὶ ἀρετὴ ὡσαύτως (ἣ μὲν γὰρ ὅλη, ἣ δὲ μόριον), ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀτελῶν ἐνέργεια ἀτελής, εἴη ἂν ἡ εὐδαιμονία ζωῆς τελείας ἐνέργεια κατ' ἀρετὴν τελείαν. I have adopted the translation offered in Kenny 2011.

in accordance with complete virtue" means. Hence, a study of virtue is an inevitable continuation of our search for a maximally clear definition of happiness. In this sense, this study is an integral part of our attempt to understand, by way of progressive clarification, what happiness is.

I will not engage in a detailed study of how Aristotle proceeds in his analysis of virtue. I am content to highlight that, after having distinguished between virtue of thought and virtue of character, Aristotle turns to virtue of character. As in the case of happiness, we are concerned with the τί ἐστι of virtue of character: we want to know what virtue of character is and what its parts are; by Aristotle's lights, the two questions come down to the same thing.[21] At the outset of his investigation, Aristotle adds the following methodological remark:

> δεῖ δὴ ζητεῖν ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔχοντές τι ζητοῦσι πάντες, ὥστε ἀεὶ διὰ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς δὲ πειρᾶσθαι λαβεῖν καὶ τὸ ἀληθῶς καὶ σαφῶς.
>
> *EE* 2.1 1220a15–19
>
> Kenny 2011: "as in other matters, all researchers start with something already in hand, so in conducting our research we must make use of statements that are true but unclarified to try to arrive at an outcome that is both true and clear."
>
> Inwood-Woolf 2013: "We must make our search with some grasp of the matter, as all who seek in other areas do, so as to try by working through what is expressed truly but unclearly, to arrive at what is both true and clear."
>
> Simpson 2013: "Our search must be made in the way everyone in other matters makes a search when they have got hold of something, so that we must use what is said truly but not clearly to try and grasp both the true and the clear."

The language adopted in this passage is the same as that we have found in the methodological passage offered in *EE* 1.6. Therefore, a very strong *prima facie*

21 *EE* 2.2, 1220a13–14: μετὰ ταῦτα σκεπτέον πρῶτον περὶ ἀρετῆς ἠθικῆς, τί ἐστι, καὶ ποῖα μόρια αὐτῆς (εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἀνῆκται).

case can be made that both the investigation of happiness and that of virtue of character are conducted by adopting the same method of progressive illumination and clarification of what is initially confounded. That is not surprising, especially if we consider that the search for the τί ἐστι of virtue of character is a natural continuation of the search for the τί ἐστι of happiness. The question for us is whether there is anything new in this second methodological passage. By my lights, the response to this question is affirmative. Aristotle makes it clear that he is adopting a method whose significance is general. Elsewhere we start with something already in hand, so here too we ought to proceed in the same way. What we have in hand is something that is true but requires clarification. Aristotle illustrates his claim with the help of two examples. It is worth recalling them: (1) It is as if we knew that health was the best condition of the body, without knowing what this condition was, or (2) it is as if we knew that Coriscus was the man with the darkest skin in the market without knowing who he was.

4 *Physics* 1

If the method of inquiry adopted in the *EE* has a more general significance, we should be able to find it adopted elsewhere. I suggest turning to *Physics* 1, where Aristotle is engaged in a search for the principles of nature. *Physics* 1 begins with a famous methodological passage where Aristotle outlines what he calls a natural road to the principles of nature:

> πέφυκε δὲ ἐκ τῶν γνωριμωτέρων ἡμῖν ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ σαφεστέρων ἐπὶ τὰ σαφέστερα τῇ φύσει καὶ γνωριμώτερα· οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὰ ἡμῖν τε γνώριμα καὶ ἁπλῶς. διόπερ ἀνάγκη τὸν τρόπον τοῦτον προάγειν ἐκ τῶν ἀσαφεστέρων μὲν τῇ φύσει ἡμῖν δὲ σαφεστέρων ἐπὶ τὰ σαφέστερα τῇ φύσει καὶ γνωριμώτερα. ἔστι δ’ ἡμῖν τὸ πρῶτον δῆλα καὶ σαφῆ τὰ συγκεχυμένα μᾶλλον· ὕστερον δ’ ἐκ τούτων γίγνεται γνώριμα τὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ διαιροῦσι ταῦτα.
>
> *Physics* 1.1, 184a16–23

> The natural road is from what is better known and clearer to us to what is clearer and better known by nature: for it is not the case that the same things are known to us and also [known] without qualification. For this very reason, it is necessary to proceed in this way from what is unclear by nature but clearer to us to what is clearer by nature and better known. The things that are confounded to a degree are at first evident and clear to us: it is only later, starting from these [confounded] things, that the

> elements and the principles come to be known to those who divide them (the translation is my own).

There are a number of striking similarities between this passage and the methodological passage in *EE* 1.6. I am content to note the most obvious. First, the goal is the same, namely achieving epistemic clarity. Second, the starting point and the end-point of the investigation are described in a similar way. While the starting point is things that are better known and clearer to us, the end-point is things that are better know and clearer without qualification. Third, the starting point in both cases is things that are confounded to a degree.[22] In *Physics* 1.1, we are also given a method for moving from the starting point to the end-point: it is by means of division (διαίρεσις) that we come to the things that are better known and clearer without qualification. It is pretty clear that διαίρεσις is not used in a technical sense to refer to the Academic method of division. Rather, it is employed in a more general sense to indicate that in the course of our inquiry we will have to separate things that are initially confounded. In other words, our analysis will consists in drawing distinctions. By so doing, what is initially confounded reveals its complexity and structure. Our analysis will reach its natural end when we have reached that which is maximally clear. Relative to what we are trying to understand, this end-point does not admit of any further articulation or distinction.[23]

We have every reason to expect Aristotle to adopt this method in his subsequent investigation into the principles of nature. Therefore, the key question is this: To what extent can we use the initial chapter to shed light on the argumentative strategy adopted in the rest of the book? I will try to sketch an answer to this large question by focusing on *Physics* 1.5–7. This stretch of text illustrates how Aristotle implements the methodological remarks offered in *Physics* 1.1. By the end of *Physics* 1.5, Aristotle has established that the opposites are principles of change in the sense that all change takes place between opposites. *Physics* 1.6–7 are part of a single argument in which Aristotle introduces the distinction between the opposites and the subject of change.[24] According to Aristotle, all his predecessors failed to make this crucial distinction. More directly, they all failed to see that what changes is something that is initially confounded but whose structure is revealed on closer examination.

22 By my lights, μᾶλλον qualifies συγκεχυμένα. Cf. *History of Animals* 1.15, 494a32 for the use συγκεχυμένα combined with μᾶλλον.

23 Here I am content to recall the main results I have reached in Falcon 2017.

24 We tend to read *Physics* 1.7 as a more or less freestanding chapter. For a recent attempt to rethink the place of this chapter in the argument of *Physics* 1, I refer the reader to Kelsey 2008.

What changes consists of two elements: the subject that underlies change (e.g. man) and the opposite (unmusical). When a man becomes musical the second element (unmusical), which is always a kind of privation, is replaced by the opposite (musical). Here we can see in what sense and how we are expected to draw distinctions and separate things that are initially confounded. A full study of the argumentative strategy adopted in *Physics* 1.5–7 would go beyond the scope of this essay. I am content to recall how Aristotle recapitulates what he has accomplished in this stretch of text:

> First it was said that the opposites alone were principles [= *Physics* 1.5], then [it was said] that there had to be something that underlies, and that the principles had to be three [= *Physics* 1.6]. From the things said now it is clear how the opposites differ, how they stand with regards to one another, and what the underlying thing is [= *Physics* 1.7].
>
> *Physics* 1.7, 191a15–19

What is especially interesting about *Physics* 1.5–7 is that we are led to the discovery of the three principles of change – the primary opposition (*form* and *privation*) and the non-contrary thing (*matter*) – by means of a procedure that is announced in *Physics* 1.1. In particular:

1. We start from what is clear and evident to us.
2. We move toward what is better known by nature.
3. We engage in a progressive clarification of what is initially confounded to a degree.

There is no doubt that this procedure has a great deal in common with the one that we have found in *EE* 1–2. However, there are also important differences. The most important and obvious one is this: while it is true that both in *Physics* 1.1 and in *EE* 1.6 we are engaged in a progressive clarification of what is initially confounded, and that in both cases the goal is epistemic clarity, the overall context is different. In *EE* 1–2, the context is the search for an answer to the τί ἐστι question. There is no concern for definition in *Physics* 1.

5 *Posterior Analytics* 2.1–2 and 2.8–10

With this conclusion in place, I would like to turn to the second book of the *Posterior Analytics*. There are at least two good reasons for turning to this notoriously difficult text. First, throughout the book Aristotle is concerned with how we come to know what we seek. Put differently, his primary focus in the

book is investigation and inquiry.[25] Second, the search for an answer to the τί ἐστι question is a main concern of the book as a whole. Aristotle sketches out an outline of how we come to know the definition that states what something is.

Let us recall the main lines of the argument in *Posterior Analytics* 2.1–2. Aristotle begins by saying that when we search for something, we try to establish either *that* something is the case, or *why* something is the case, or *whether* something is, or *what* something is. Then he relates these four kinds of inquiry to his theory of syllogistic demonstration. When we try to establish that something is the case or whether something is, we search for a middle term; when we search for the why or what it is, we search for what that middle term is. With this apparently innocent move, Aristotle is able to establish that a successful inquiry is conducted on the basis of two questions: an εἴ ἐστι question to be followed by a τί ἐστι question. By answering the first question, we do not simply establish that something is the case but also that this fact calls for further investigation. In other words, the search for an answer to the second question is a natural, and indeed inevitable, consequence of a positive answer to the first question. Moreover, the investigation that follows upon a positive answer to the first question combines a search for causes and a search for a definition. Aristotle's example is very clear on this point. He gives us the following definition of lunar eclipse: privation of light coming from the moon due to the interposition of the earth (90a15-16). This definition does not only tell us what a lunar eclipse is; it also singles out the cause of the lunar eclipse, namely the interposition of the earth between the moon and the sun.

What we want to drive home from this brief summary of the argument offered in *Posterior Analytics* 2.1–2 is that Aristotle outlines *an inquiry that unfolds in stages*.[26] Aristotle returns to the stages of this inquiry in *Posterior Analytics* 2.8. There, he adds the following, crucial detail to his account: we can have

25 Aristotle adopts a vocabulary that is quite explicit in stating that the book is about search and discovery. A favorite term is ζήτησις (90a5, 24) as found also in the repeated used of the verb ζητεῖν (ζητούμενα: 89b23; ζητοῦμεν: 89b24, 26, 28, 31, 32, 34; 89b36, 37; 90a1, 4, 9, 25; 90a1, 93a17; ζητεῖται: 90a7) in *Posterior Analytics* 2.1–2.

26 A complication I do not explore here is whether Aristotle outlines a two- or a three-stage account. On the latter, the three stages would be the following: [stage 1] giving an account of what a name or name-like expression signifies; [stage 2] establishing the existence of the things that is signified; and [stage 3] establishing what the thing is. This reading of the investigation outlined in *Posterior Analytics* 2 is developed and endorsed in Charles 2000. A defense of the two-stage account is offered in Bolton 2017. On this account, the stages are: [stage 1] establishing that something is the case, and [stage 2] establishing what it is.

accidental or non-accidental knowledge of the thing that exists (93a21–22). In the case of successful inquiry, the search for an answer to the εἴ ἐστι question must result in non-accidental knowledge of the thing that exists. For Aristotle this knowledge amounts to grasping something of the thing itself (93a22). His examples of non-accidental knowledge are that thunder is a kind of noise in the clouds, eclipse is a kind of privation of light, human being is a kind of animal, and soul is something that moves itself. When we have knowledge of this sort, that is, non-accidental knowledge of the existence of something, we are on the right path. Why? Because this is knowledge that is already directed toward the τί ἐστι of the thing (93a28–29).[27]

It is not difficult to find similarities between the two-stage account of inquiry outlined in *Posterior Analytics* 2.1–2 and 2.8 and the investigation conducted in the *EE*. In the latter, we are engaged in a search for the τί ἐστι of happiness. As Aristotle himself tells us, we begin our search with something already in hand. In my view, this is the initial definition of happiness as the greatest of the human goods. When we have this definition in hand, we are in an epistemic state that is similar to the state we are in if we know that health consists in the best condition of the body without knowing what this condition is. Aristotle gives this example at the outset of his search for the τί ἐστι of virtue of character to illustrate the idea that any search for the τί ἐστι begins with something in hand. If we follow the suggestion that the actual investigation conducted in the *EE* is in line with method of inquiry outlined in the *Posterior Analytics*, it is tempting to consider the initial definition of happiness a *nominal* definition of happiness.[28]

27 This aspect of Aristotle's account is studied in Bolton 1976. Cf. also Bolton 1987 and Goldin 1996.

28 On the three-stage account of inquiry outlined in the *Posterior Analytics* 2, the initial definition merely signifies what we take to be happiness. As such, this definition does not commit us to the existence of happiness. The existence of happiness as the greatest of the human goods is established only when we rule out that the chief good is the Idea of the Good, or that it is the common good. By ruling out these two alternative scenarios, we indirectly establish that there exists a human good. Moreover, at this point, and only at this point, we also have non-accidental knowledge of its existence: happiness is the purpose in the sense of the end that is the cause of what leads to it and is that for the sake of which everything else is done. Both stage 1 and stage 2 of our inquiry would be successfully discharged at the end of *EE* 1. The transition to stage 3 would take place at the outset of *EE* 2. At this point, we would be ready to look for a definition that states what the nature of the supreme good that can be achieved by humans is. This feat would be reached in the first part of *EE* 2.1. On the alternative, two-stage account of inquiry outlined in the *Posterior Analytics* 2, the initial definition has an existential import. As such, this definition is not merely a definition of the name but rather it is a definition that also gives a grip on the existence of happiness. On this view, this definition allows us to get off the ground

I have insisted on what I see as obvious points of contact between the search for the definition of happiness conducted in the *EE* and the method of inquiry outlined in *Posterior Analytics* 2. Still, we should not underplay some important differences. The most conspicuous is this: there is no explicit mention of epistemic clarity in the account of inquiry offered in *Posterior Analytics* 2. More directly, there is no evidence that in *Posterior Analytics* 2 Aristotle thinks of inquiry in terms of progressive clarification or illumination of something that is initially confounded. By contrast, we have seen that in the *EE* Aristotle conceives of his overall task in terms of progressive clarification. We have also seen that the concern for epistemic clarity is not unique to the investigation conducted in the *EE*. It is made explicit at the outset in the search for the principles of nature conducted in *Physics* 1. But it would not be difficult to point to other passages from the Aristotelian corpus where inquiry is introduced in terms of a progression from what is clear to us to what is clear *tout court*. See, for instance, the opening lines of *On the Soul* 2.2, where we are told that "it is from things that are unclear but evident [to us] that what is clear and better known in relation to reason comes to be" (413a11–12: ἐκ τῶν ἀσαφῶν μὲν φανερώτερων δὲ γίνεται τὸ σαφὲς καὶ τὸ κατὰ λόγον γνωριμώτερον).[29] All this makes even more notable the absence of an explicit reference to epistemic clarity in the two-stage account of inquiry advanced in the second book of the *Posterior Analytics*.

I speak of explicit reference because there is an interpretation of the second book of the *Posterior Analytics* that reads a concern for clarity into the two-stage account that Aristotle advances there. If we adopt this interpretation, the difference on this point between the method of inquiry outlined *Posterior*

by giving us non-accidental knowledge of the existence of the chief good. In this sense, we start from this particular definition because this definition encapsulates some crucial information about the thing to be investigated.

29 On epistemic clarity as a major Aristotelian issue, see Lesher 2010. I hasten to add that it would be a mistake to think that this concern for epistemic clarity is unique to Aristotle. On the contrary, it is a prominent concern in Plato as well. See, for instance, how degrees of clarity (σαφενεῖα) and obscurity (ἀσαφεῖα) are associated with the segments Plato's divided line (509 D-510 B). Cf. also *Republic* 524C3–8, where Plato envisions reaching clarity (σαφενεῖα) by means of reason (νόησις) starting from what is confounded (συγκεχυμένα). Moreover, the close link between truth, knowledge, and clarity is ubiquitous in ancient Greek thought. See Xenophanes' fragments 34: "no human being has seen or will ever see the clear truth (τὸ σαφές) about the gods and about everything I speak of." Cf. how the author of the treatise *On Ancient Medicine* dismisses "the study of what is in the sky and below the earth." By his lights, those engaged in this sort of study are pretentious because in these things "there nothing by referring to which one can see the clear truth (τὸ σαφές) (Littré I, 572)."

Analytics and the actual investigation conducted in *EE* 1–2 may be – if not eliminated – at least reduced to a difference in emphasis. I have in mind the interpretation that Jacopo Zabarella offered of the two-stage account of inquiry. This interpretation can be found in several of his works, including the commentary on the *Posterior Analytics.* By way of conclusion, I briefly recall this interpretation by looking at how Zabarella reads *Posterior Analytics* 2.1–2 and 2.8–10. When we have successfully answered the εἴ ἐστι question, and therefore know that there is a middle term, we are in an epistemic state that Zabarella describes as *confusa cognitio*. This is an epistemic state that calls for further investigation. When we know what the middle term is, then we are in the epistemic state that Zabarella calls *distincta cognitio*.[30] Zabarella makes the same exegetical move in his reading of *Posterior Analytics* 2.8. When we know that thunder is a kind of noise in the clouds, or that a lunar eclipse is a kind of privation of light, as in the examples that Aristotle offers in *Posterior Analytics* 1.8, we only have a *confusam notitiam* of these things.[31] What we are missing in this case is knowledge of the cause. It is only with the latter that we achieve clear and distinct knowledge. On this reading of the two-stage account of inquiry, the search for an answer to the question τί ἐστι has a starting point and an end-point that are very close to those of the actual investigation conducted in *EE* 1–2. On this reading, moreover, it is not really a stretch to recast the overall process as a progression aiming at epistemic clarity.

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30 In his explication of *Posterior Analytics* 2.2, Zabarella: "*Omnis quaestio vel est quaestio an sit aliquod medium, vel est quaestio quondam sit illum medium. Illa est quaestio confusa et cognitio confusa; haec vero distincta. Quando enim cognoscimus dari aliquod medium id est, causa qua res est. Quaeman autem fit illa causa ignoramus, confuse cognoscimus rem: quia causam potestate tantum habemus*" (*On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* 1045 B-C).

31 Here is how Zabarella reads the two examples of the thunder and the eclipse given in *Posterior Analytics* 2.8: "*dum enim Philosophus dicit 'ut tonitrum quod est sonus quidam nubium et eclipsim quod est privatio quaedam luminis' confusam indicat e tonitrus et eclipsi cognitionem ut denota tilla diction 'quidam' signifcat enim ignorationem causae propter quam est tonitrus et causae propter quam est eclipsis*" (*On Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* 1114 B).

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CHAPTER 11

Is the Phronimos Shame-Less? Shame, Habituation and the Notion of the Noble in Aristotle

Marilù Papandreou

Abstract

This article examines the relation between shame and the notion of the noble starting from Alexander's *Ethical Problems*. *Problem* 21 is prompted by the Aristotelian discussion of the concept of shame. *NE* 2.7 1108a30–35 and *NE* 4.9 1128b15–21 present an apparent contradiction that Alexander aspires to solve: in the former passage, Aristotle states that shame is virtue-like in being praiseworthy; in the latter, shame's praiseworthiness is restricted to young people. Alexander solves this contradiction by rejecting the second passage: shame is not an emotion and its praiseworthiness applies to virtuous adults in particular. This article claims that, although Alexander rightly relates shame to the knowledge of the noble, neither of the Aristotelian passages must be rejected. The emotional status of shame is exhibited by Aristotle's definition of shame as fear of disrepute. However, by considering shame and fear as ethical motivations, particularly in the case of courageous citizens and learners, the article shows that shame, unlike fear, implies knowledge of as well as sensitivity towards the noble. Moreover, the restriction of shame's praiseworthiness to young people is defended by showing that shame is the best option in the absence of virtue. By contrast, the fully virtuous adult, i.e. the *phronimos*, is not supposed to feel shame. Neither does the *phronimos* act out of shame, nor does he feel prospective or retrospective shame.

Is shame a sign of a good character or of wrongdoing? Should the shamefaced person be praised or blamed? Is the ideal agent without shame? Such questions go straight to the heart of the philosophical problem that the concept of shame embodies. Shame is a challenging concept: it seems to be praiseworthy but related to wrongdoings, and it seems to be an emotion but related to the stable condition of a virtue. Alexander puts on the table one of the issues about shame, namely whether it is praiseworthy with or without qualification. Alexander's discussion is particularly useful not only for identifying the

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Aristotelian key texts for any serious discussion about shame, but also for discovering the special relation of shame to the noble.

Alexander focuses on two passages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that seem to be in contradiction. The first is *NE* 2.7 1108a30–35, where Aristotle firmly states that shame (*aidōs*) is not a virtue but is praiseworthy. The second passage is *NE* 4.9 1128b15–21, where he says that shame is only praiseworthy in young people. Alexander solves this tension by refuting the view of the second passage and applying shame′s praiseworthiness also and especially to virtuous adults. He relates shame and knowledge of what is noble closely, and he argues that whoever has sure knowledge and is habituated to virtue feels shame to the highest degree. I will try to endorse and reinforce the relation drawn by Alexander between shame and the notion of the noble but pursuing a different strategy. In fact, I claim that Alexander's results and his rejection of the second passage are due to the way in which he regards the relation between shame and fear, i.e. by treating shame as a kind of fear. I also claim that if shame is taken as an emotion distinct from fear rather than a kind of fear, its relation to the noble is strengthened and the final upshot is that none of the Aristotelian passages has to be rejected.

In the first section I first describe Alexander's discussion of shame as applied to three main cases: the virtuous adult, the shameless adult, and the young person. Secondly, I sketch the account of shame as we find it in Aristotle's ethical works.

The second section takes on the Aristotelian definition of shame as fear of disrepute and introduces a strategy different from Alexander's by highlighting the differences between fear and shame. These differences are particularly clear when considering fear and shame as ethical motivations. Two cases will help to understand how prospective shame is opposed to fear as an ethical motivation and related to the notion of the noble: that of citizens when performing courageous actions and that of learners as opposed to the many.

The third section is devoted to the discussion of prospective shame as the best option in practical behaviour in the absence of virtue. The case of courageous citizens and the case of the learner are here investigated as those cases of somewhat vicious or not-yet-virtuous agents, who are still capable of performing virtuous actions with the right motive, i.e. pursuing the noble.

The final section investigates shame in the presence of virtue, discussing the case of the *phronimos*. The incompatibility between being motivated by shame and being fully virtuous gets clearer. Finally, the section inquiries into the possibility that the *phronimos* at least feels shame, without shame being his ethical motivation.

1 Shame between Alexander's *Ethical Problems* and Aristotle's Ethics

The *Ethical Problems* is a collection of essays connected with the school of Alexander of Aphrodisias.[1] The essays are primarily concerned with topics of moral philosophy.[2] Each essay deals with a specific problem arising from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the urge is to solve apparent contradictions within the Aristotelian theory. Note that the treatment of the *NE* to the detriment of the *Eudemian Ethics* is in line with Aspasius' promotion of the *NE* as the definitive Aristotelian ethical work.[3] The intended readership seems to be the school of Alexander, for some problems suggest an origin in teaching activity.[4]

Problem 21 discusses the topic of shame and is one of those problems aroused in a teaching context. Out of a list of thirty problems, this is the only one concerning a specific emotion. This problem is prompted by the apparent contradiction between *NE* 2.7 1108a30–35 and *NE* 4.9 1128b15–21. In *NE* 2.7 1108a30–35 Aristotle defends the praiseworthiness of shame without restrictions:

> There are means also in the emotions and concerned with the emotions. Shame is not a virtue but he who feels ashamed is praised. For also in these one man is to be intermediate and another excessive – for example the bashful man who is ashamed of everything; while he who falls short in shame, or is not ashamed of anything whatsoever, is shameless, and the intermediate man is modest.[5]

Shame is described as an emotion rather than a virtue, similar to virtue insofar it is a mean and is praiseworthy. By contrast, in *NE* 4.9 1128b15–21, Aristotle expressly delimits its praiseworthiness to the young person:

> The emotion [of shame] is not becoming to every age, but only to the young. For we think young people should be prone to shame, because as they live by emotions they often err, but are restrained by shame; and we

1 In the present discussion, I refer to "Alexander" as the author of the *Ethical Problems*, without implying any view as to authorship.

2 Following Sharples 1990, the topics are: criticism of Stoic ethics (1 and 3); virtue, its nature and happiness (24, 25, and 27); the interrelation of the virtues (8 and 28); the relation between pleasure and happiness (18 and 23); the relation between pleasure, distress, and pain (5, 7, 14, 16); and then again voluntary and involuntary action (9, 11, 12 and 29) and others. A discussion by topic is to be found in Moraux 2001.

3 Kenny 1978: 29–36.

4 Sharples 2001: 594.

5 I provide my own translation of Aristotle's passages.

> praise young people who are prone to this emotion, though no one would praise an older person for being prone to the sense of shame, since we think he ought not to do anything of which he needs be ashamed.

Alexander tackles this apparent contradiction and attempts to solve it. His first move is to refer to the definition of shame as we find it at the beginning of *NE* 4.9: shame is fear of ill repute (φόβος τις ἀδοξίας).[6] On the basis of this definition, Alexander argues that shame can come about both with truly bad deeds and with suspicious deeds, for ill repute can come about in both cases. Furthermore, if shame arises also in cases in which the agent does not truly perform the wrong action, the best agent can also feel this emotion. Additionally, the more virtuous the agent is, the more he feels ashamed, because he is more at variance with shameful things:

> Moreover: for those who have lived noble and respected [lives], because they are at variance with all shameful things in every way, the fear of ill repute in respect of these is greater, and they avoid it more. And so, it comes about that those people for whom shameful things are very hateful feel the greatest shame.
>
> *EP* 21 142.8–12[7]

In Alexander's understanding of Aristotle's account of shame, the *phronimos* should be the one who feels shame to the highest degree.[8] By stressing that shame is fear of disrepute, Alexander tends to substitute the shame itself with the disrepute. The first result is that shame can come about either with ignoble deeds or deeds which are merely objects of suspicion.[9] The second result is that the ideal agent also feels the emotion of shame, and indeed to a greater degree. Given these results, Alexander rejects two points from the Aristotelian discussion: first, that shame is praiseworthy only in youth, and secondly, that it is an emotion rather than a virtue. Shame becomes the disposition of people who, hating the shameful, feel shame after having done or being related to something shameful. As Alexander points out at the end of this problem,[10] the opposite case to the *phronimos* is that of mature people who are shameless:

6 *NE* 4.9 1128b11–12.
7 *EP*'s translations are Sharples' 1990.
8 In the present discussion, I label as *phronimos* the ideal agent.
9 *EP* 21 141.32–142.2.
10 *EP* 21 142.16–21.

although they do shameful deeds, they do not feel ashamed because they have become familiar with shameful deeds and stably insensitive to the possible consequent disrepute. The *phronimos*,[11] by contrast, feels shame because he has acquired a disposition according to which he is prone to feeling ashamed, certainly not because he deviates from the mean, but because his hate for the shameful in any of its forms is firm and strong. Hence, although the *phronimos* will never do shameful things, he can still feel ashamed about whatever can be considered shameful and can bring him into disrepute.[12]

As illustrated above, in this ethical problem, Alexander takes into account the cases of the virtuous adult and the shameless adult, with a declared preference for understanding shame as an acquired disposition.[13] What about the case of a young agent who has not yet formed a character? This case is not treated in *Problem* 21, but it seems to be relevant insofar as it is the point of agreement between the two Aristotelian passages. A clue can be found in *Problem* 9,[14] in which Alexander takes on the topic of voluntariness. Importantly, he states that the learner too can do bad deeds without failing to know that they are bad (i.e. voluntarily); he feels ashamed, and this is the sign that he knew he chose to do the wrong thing:

> [The point] is also clear from those who are beginning to act wrongly. For none of them embarks upon bad things in the beginning without knowing that they *are* bad; at any rate all [of them], when they begin, are ashamed and are eager not to be observed, and embark upon these things on the basis that they will not do them a second time, being convinced that they will be harmed by them to some extent, but yielding to pleasure, not through conviction that it is preferable for them, but through not wishing to make a small effort in resisting it.
>
> *EP* 9 129.2–8

11 The virtuous adult feels more ashamed also because of his age: having ill repute at such an age makes it even worse.

12 *EP* 21 142.2–8.

13 Although Aristotle explicitly denies that shame is a virtue, he does not offer any explicit argument for denying shame (*aidōs*) the status of *hexis*, as pointed out by Cairns 1993. After all, Aristotle introduces the concept of being prone to feeling shame and speaks of it as a *dunamis* (*EE* 2.2 1220b17–18). We will return to this point. At this stage, let us highlight that Alexander's discussion indicates crucial issues with Aristotle's account, such as the tension between speaking of a feeling of shame, i.e. an emotion, and "being prone to shame" which comes closer to a dispositional status.

14 *Problem* 9 is indeed titled "That not all those who act wrongly do so through ignorance that what they are doing is bad and harmful."

The knowledge of what is the best thing to do on a particular occasion is provided by the presence of laws, parents, and tutors.[15] The learner, who chooses to act badly, knows which action would be better. However, he makes the choice to act badly because he wishes for pleasure.[16] If the learner gets habituated to acting wrongly, he will stop feeling ashamed, as he will also stop knowing that the bad deeds are truly bad:

> once they have developed the habit of acting wrongly, they are neither ashamed nor think about bad things as being bad for themselves.
>
> *EP* 9 129.24–25

It seems that, in Alexander's view, shame and the knowledge of what is good are closely connected: the learner knows what is better to do and not doing it makes him feel ashamed, whereas the bad adult does not know anymore what is good and, hence, he does not feel ashamed. Alternatively, the virtuous adult knows what is better to the highest degree and hence feels ashamed to the highest degree.

To summarise, in the *Ethical Problems* there are the following three cases: (i) the *phronimos*,[17] who feels the most ashamed because he has been habituated to disapprove of things shameful in any way; (ii) the shameless adult, who feels shame neither about shameful deeds done nor about suspicious deeds, because he has been habituated to them and disdains ill repute; and (iii) the learner, who feels shame because he knows he has done the wrong thing, but not to the highest degree because he has not already acquired the disposition of being at variance with shameful things.

Problem 21 is prompted by the second and the fourth books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The passage from *NE* 2.7 introduces the mean also in the case of emotions.[18] Aristotle clearly affirms that shame is not a virtue, but that it is virtue-like in being a mean and praiseworthy. The two extremes are said to be the shy person (καταπλήξ) on the one hand, who is ashamed also about things of which one should not be ashamed, and the shameless person (ἀναίσχυντος), on the other, who is not ashamed of anything. An appropriate feeling of shame does simply not express a virtue, but it does represent the case in which one feels shame neither too much nor too little. The idea that shame is the intermediate

15 *EP* 9 129.16–19.

16 This is perfectly in line with the frequent Aristotelian idea that young are passionate.

17 Alexander does not make explicit mention of the *phronimos*. I use *phronimos* as a label for fully virtuous adults.

18 *NE* 2.7 1108a30–35.

at which the agent should aim appears to be constant in Aristotle: one finds the same view in the *EE*.[19] In the second chapter of the second book of the *EE*, Aristotle draws the reader's attention to the distinction between emotions, capacities, and states. Emotions are a certain kind of passion always accompanied by pleasure or pain. Among the emotions, he includes shame.[20] In the following chapter, shame is the mean between shamelessness (ἀναισχυντία) and bashfulness (κατάπληξις).[21] When he returns to the topic of shame in the third book,[22] we are again told that shame is the mean between bashfulness and shamelessness (αἰδὼς δὲ μεσότης ἀναισχυντίας καὶ καταπλήξεως). The given explanation is that the shameless person feels shame before no one, the bashful feels shame before everyone, and the intermediate man feels ashamed only in relation to the opinion of good men. On a closer look, there is a slight difference between the two passages. In the *NE*, the emphasis is on the shamefulness of the deeds, whereas in the *EE*, it is on the person before whom we feel ashamed. In order to call shame appropriate, both aspects should be taken into account.[23] The doctrine of the mean concerns parameters of appropriateness that are not merely quantitative.[24]

Shame is a mean and it is praiseworthy. However, as Aristotle states, praiseworthiness accompanies virtues and not emotions, because there is no "responsibility" in feeling a certain emotion. Hence, Aristotle needs to justify more clearly the status of shame as an emotion,[25] and this is what he does in *NE*

19 I will deal also with some passages from the *Eudemian Ethics*, although the *Ethical Problems* seem to have as background the *Nicomachean Ethics* alone. See Kenny 1978.

20 *EE* 2.2 1220b12–13.

21 *EE* 2.3 1221a1.

22 *EE* 3.7 1233b26–29.

23 In the second book of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle illustrates the conditions under which we feel ashamed: they amount to the target person before whom we feel ashamed and also the deeds themselves of which we feel ashamed.

24 See Rapp 2006.

25 Aristotle here states that shame is not a virtue, but rather an emotion, using the word *aidōs*. This goes against the interpretation of the difference between *aidōs* and *aischunē* according to which the former refers to a disposition and the latter a certain feeling of disgrace. Cairns 1993 argues that the fact that shame is not a virtue does not rule out the possibility that shame is a disposition. However, I argue that *NE* 4.9 is devoted precisely to proving that shame is an emotion, i.e. something episodic accompanied by bodily effects. Moreover, the young learner acting out of a sense of shame cannot act out of a stable disposition, for acquiring a stable disposition (whether virtuous or vicious) entails time, exercise and habituation. My discussion is based mainly on the idea that there is no discernible difference between the two words in Aristotle. Furthermore, although it seems that *aidōs* has a more positive connotation and that *aischunē* is more negatively used in

4.9. The whole chapter should be read in this light, right from the beginning:[26] "Shame should not be described as a virtue; for it is like an emotion rather than a state" (πάθει γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικεν ἢ ἕξει). In order to do that, the first step is to define shame no longer as a mean, but rather in relation to another emotion: "It is defined, at any rate, as a kind of fear of disrepute" (φόβος τις ἀδοξίας). The second step is to describe shame as episodic, by referring to bodily effects:

> […] and produces an effect similar to that produced by fear of danger; for people who feel ashamed blush, and those who fear death turn pale. Both, in a way, seem to be bodily conditions, which appears to be characteristic of emotion rather than of a state.[27]
>
> *NE* 4.9 1128b12–15

The third and definitive step is to point out that shame is praiseworthy only in young people: "the emotion is not becoming to every age, but only to the young." If shame is a virtue, then it must occur and be appropriate at every age. However, Aristotle highlights that we do not praise older people for being prone to shame. Later, he says that we do not praise it when occurring in good people either.[28] This remark leaves no room for considering shame a virtue.

The scholarship refers to this chapter primarily for the distinction between prospective or inhibitory shame and retrospective shame.[29] The former is the one we praise in young people, the shame that prevents a person from doing something bad. The latter is the one that is inappropriate in older people; the emotion felt when someone has done something bad voluntarily. This does

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NE 4.9, I would not suggest a strict correspondence between prospective and retrospective shame and *aidōs* and *aischunē*.

26 *NE* 4.9 1228b10–16: the concept of "being prone to shame" may be seen as a disposition, as Cairns 1993 suggests. However, being prone to shame means being prone to feeling the emotion of shame. Does this make shame a disposition? As I will later demonstrate, the young learner prone to shame is not such because of a disposition, but he rather emotionally responds to concerns about the noble more than to, for instance, the possibility of punishment. This does not mean that he has acquired a disposition according to which he is more sensitive to the noble than to punishment. Rather, it means that the learner is gradually internalizing the concept of noble in such a way that he emotionally responds to external concerns (perhaps other people's judgments) as well as to internal ones (such as standards of nobility he agrees with and that are partially internalized).

27 The reference to the bodily effects is the mark of an emotion, for stable dispositions like virtue do not bring about bodily effects. In *Rhet.* 2.6 1383b12–17, shame is defined as "a sort of pain and agitation concerning the class of evils, whether present or past or future, that seem to bring a person into disrespect" (Kennedy's translation 2007).

28 *NE* 4.9 1128b21–22.

29 Irwin 1999 and Taylor 2006.

not mean that shame is a non-uniform emotion: “what varies is simply the timing of the perceived ills.”[30] Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that prospective shame is the positively evaluated moral side of this emotion, because feeling prospective shame can play the role of a practical motivation. It is noteworthy that in *Problem* 9, when speaking about the young, Alexander focuses on retrospective shame alone. In *Problem* 21, after mentioning prospective shame right at the beginning,[31] he considers it no more, and in the cases of the shameless adult and the virtuous adult he seems to consider only retrospective shame. The learner feels ashamed after his bad deeds, the shameless person does not avoid shameful deeds, and, despite that, he does not feel shame, and “the person who has done nothing shameful is not excluded from being able to become the subject of disrepute.”[32]

2 Shame and Fear as Ethical Motivations

Alexander solves the contradiction within the Aristotelian discussion of shame by denying that shame is praiseworthy only in youth and that it is an emotion. Shame is rather a virtue and, consistently with that, it is praiseworthy at any age. Alexander reaches his conclusions by taking up the definition of shame as fear of disrepute and considering the two terms species of the same kind of emotion, differing from each other only with regard to the feared object. In the following, I intend to work with the same definition, but to stress the differences between shame and fear. In this manner, we might find a way to soften the tension between the Aristotelian passages without discarding either of them.

In *NE* 4.9, Aristotle defines shame as a kind of fear of disrepute (φόβος τις ἀδοξίας) and draws attention to the similarity between shame and fear with respect to their bodily effects. Based on this definition, one might understand shame as a specific kind of fear: in particular, the fear of disrepute. The link between fear and shame is quite common in Aristotle. In *NE* 3.6, the shameless person is said to be similar to the courageous person because he does not feel fear.[33] In the same chapter, we are told that the courageous person faces what is fearful and that fearful things are *kaka*. Among these *kaka*, Aristotle also includes disrepute.[34] So far, shame seems to be just a more specific kind of fear,

30 Konstan 2006: 99.
31 *EP* 21 141.17–19.
32 *EP* 21 142.2–4.
33 *NE* 3.6 1115a14–16.
34 *NE* 3.6 1115a6–11.

recalling what Socrates says in the *Euthyphro*: shame and fear are in the same relation as odd and number, so that shame is just a part or a species of fear.[35] However, Aristotle later adds an important specification: the courageous person faces fearful things, and in the strict sense, among the fearful things, we do not count things of which it is noble to be afraid and it is shameful not to be afraid, such as disrepute.[36] It turns out that, strictly speaking, disrepute is to be counted among the *aischra* rather than among the *kaka*. We come to know that the shameful and the fearful are slightly different, but it is not yet clear whether fear and shame themselves are really distinct. A crucial passage on this topic is found at *EE* 3.1:[37] fear only occurs in connection with the expectation of pains whose nature is to be destructive of life, and in this sense, it is distinct from envy, jealousy, and shame. Here, shame seems to be the painful expectation of a pain that is not destructive of life, and indeed disrepute is not destructive of life. This distinction between fear and shame in terms of the feared objects reminds us of Plato's *Laws*,[38] where the Athenian distinguishes two forms of fear: one is about evils (proper fear), and the other is about opinions (shame). At any rate, it becomes gradually clear that it is very tricky to talk about shame as distinct from fear when Aristotle's main purpose is to clarify that shame is an emotion and not a virtue, as at the beginning of *NE* 4.9; but when Aristotle is dealing with specific ethical issues, such as the virtue of courage, then we come to see the distinction between them. Distinguishing fear and shame is a crucial step towards understanding the moral importance of shame. As long as we consider fear and shame as mere emotions, there is no relevant difference between feeling fear and feeling shame,[39] and both seem to respond to external sanctions alone. But what if we evaluate this pair of emotions as moral? If fear and shame become motivations for acting virtuously, then they become distinct to a greater degree. In a moral context, is there any difference between being motivated by fear and being motivated by shame?

Two cases seem to suggest an affirmative answer: the courage of citizens and the case of the many. When Aristotle in *NE* 3.8 illustrates the five ways to perform courageous actions without being courageous in the strict sense,[40] he

35 *Euthyphro* 12c3–8.
36 *NE* 3.6 1115a11–14.
37 *EE* 3.1 1229a33–39.
38 *Laws* 646e10–11.
39 This is true for all the Aristotelian emotions: they are not clearly distinct items.
40 I refer to the well-known Aristotelian distinction between a simply virtuous action that is performed in accordance with virtue and a truly virtuous action, which is performed with the right motivation, knowledge, and the stability of a virtuous character (*NE* 2.4 1105a29–33).

mentions the courage of citizens in the first stage. This is said to resemble courage itself the most, because it is prompted by virtue (δι' ἀρετὴν γίνεται). However, the courage of citizens is an imperfect form of courage because it does not come out of courage itself: in what way, then, is the courage of citizens prompted by virtue? Aristotle explains that civic courage comes from shame and from the desire for the noble (δι' αἰδῶ γὰρ καὶ διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν), which here is represented by one's reputation (τιμῆς γάρ), and from the desire to avoid what is shameful, which is blameworthy (καὶ φυγὴν ὀνείδους, αἰσχροῦ ὄντος).[41] This explanation does not unexpectedly turn shame into a virtue; rather it describes citizens as acting with virtuous motivation. The citizens' actions are guided by considerations of nobility. Aristotle considers the possibility of grouping together with the citizens also those doing courageous actions forced by officers. However, this possibility is rejected because the citizens act out of shame, whereas the forced soldiers act out of fear, e.g. fear of punishments. The agents who do courageous actions because they fear the painful are inferior (χείρους) to those fearing the shameful. Aristotle clearly finds it morally better to be motivated by shame than to be motivated by fear, because in the former case one acts for the sake of something noble and in order to avoid the shameful, whereas in the latter case one acts only in order to avoid something more painful (taking pleasure and pain as the main reference for one's behaviour). In what follows,[42] Aristotle compares the behaviour of citizens to that of professional soldiers when the battle gets dangerous and they find themselves at a disadvantage. In this case, professional soldiers run away, because they fear death more than the shameful. By contrast, citizens are sensitive to the fact that running away is shameful, and they would rather face death. It is remarkable that, in this discussion, not only are the fearful and the painful distinct, and not only are shame and fear, but so are the painful and the shameful, as if shame is gradually losing any similarity with fear.[43]

Let us move on to the case of the many. In the last chapter of *NE* 10,[44] Aristotle tells us that theory alone cannot make men virtuous. Nonetheless, the ethical discourses can still benefit also those who are not virtuous. This is especially the case for the young person who is already on the way to a virtuous life, and already desires the noble (φιλόκαλον). Ethical theory, however, cannot drive the many (τοὺς πολλοὺς) to moral perfection. Here we find the opposition

41 *NE* 3.8 1116a27–32.

42 *NE* 3.8 1116b15–23.

43 In the Aristotelian account of each emotion, its relation to pleasure and pain seems to be the most essential feature, which often is mentioned in the "definition." See especially the discussion of the emotions in *Rhet.* 2.6.

44 *NE* 10.9 1179b4–16.

between the learner, who has a good character, desires the noble, and is on his way to the fully virtuous life, and οἱ πολλοί, who cannot be stimulated to the virtuous life with the discipline of ethics. The many and the learner are similar inasmuch as they both are said to be passionate and they are not virtuous agents. But why are the many insensitive to ethical discourse and thus apparently doomed? Aristotle clarifies that the difference between the promising learner and the many is that the many are not prone to shame, but rather to fear:

> [Arguments] seem unable drive the many towards moral perfection. For they naturally do not obey shame, but fear; they keep away from bad deeds not because it is shameful, but because of punishments. For since they live by emotions, they pursue their own pleasures and the means to them, and avoid the opposite pains, and they do not have a notion of what is noble and truly pleasant, since they have not tasted it. What argument, then, could reform people like them?
>
> *NE* 10.9 1179b10–18

When the many choose to perform a virtuous action, they do it not because they hate the shameful, but because they are afraid of punishment. The many are sensitive to fear rather than shame, in a quite stable manner, for this sensitivity is rooted in their character. An ethical discourse cannot change such people and perhaps it may hardly benefit them.[45] The many differ from the good learner not only because they respond to fear rather than to shame, but also because they lack a notion of the noble. Does this mean that they are defective human beings with no concept of nobility whatsoever? I suggest rather that the many may have a concept of the noble and may also comprehend the arguments in its favour. What is crucial is that the many are not sensitive to shame, and shame itself means sensitivity to considerations about the noble and disgraceful. The emotion of shame implies some grasp of the noble and being motivated to pursue it. The many might know the noble too, but knowledge alone does not suffice in order to perform a virtuous action or a promising action, such as the one performed out of shame.[46] The grasp of the

45 See also *NE* 10.9 1179b26–29 and 1180a4–5.

46 In Aristotle's view, the many might possess or acquire knowledge of the noble yet be insensitive to it. By contrast, in Alexander's view, those who are not virtuous develop ignorance of the noble.

noble implied by acting out of shame is knowledge of, agreement with and gradual internalization of the noble.[47]

In the discussion of citizens, as well as in that of the many and the learners, being motivated by shame is crucially distinct from and opposed to being motivated by fear. Shame is a positively evaluated moral emotion and it is related to the noble. As for courageous citizens, shame is connected with the desire for something noble, like honours (διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν (τιμῆς γάρ)) and opposed to the fear of punishment and death. As for the many, shame is related to a lack of the concept of the noble (φιλόκαλον) and a pronounced sensitivity to fear. However, here Aristotle is referring to people who are not yet virtuous. What does it mean to be motivated by shame? Is it different from being motivated by virtue?

3 Being Motivated by Shame as the Best Option in the Absence of Virtue

The young learner and the citizen are similar insofar as they are not fully virtuous and hence cannot act from the motive of virtue itself. It is worth investigating these two cases further, because they show that being motivated by shame is the best option on the table in the absence of virtue.

The shame of the young learner is praiseworthy in both the key passages. The young learner represents the case in which habituation does not yet play a definitive role and in which virtues and practical wisdom are not yet ethical motivations. More specifically, practical knowledge and virtue come about through habituation, practice, and time, and therefore they cannot be present yet in young people.[48] Young people can perform virtuous actions without being virtuous. In order for the learner to become virtuous, he has to have first-hand experience and act virtuously day by day. In *NE* 4.9 1128b15–19, Aristotle argues that we praise young people who feel shame because young people are more prone to make mistakes by living according to their emotions, and shame can prevent such mistakes. As we have seen, in the last chapter of the *NE* Aristotle relates sensitivity to shame with some kind of desire for the noble. This means that the young learner prone to shame has a general idea of things that

47 I return to this point in the next section. At this stage, it is important to stress that knowledge of the noble is not a sufficient condition for acting virtuously. The *phronimos*' actions are not triggered by mere knowledge of the noble.

48 *NE* 6.8 1142a14–15.

are noble, desires them, and tries to reach them by avoiding what is shameful. This grasp of noble things follows, as Alexander points out,[49] as a result of the learner's acquaintance with the laws, his parents, and his tutors. For this reason, Aristotle's ethics cannot be called totally "anti-intellectual," since the young person responds to the rational plan of the laws and competent tutors.[50] Thanks to this sort of system, the young person can act *kata logon*, even if this rationality is in a way external to him. However, with time, this rationality will become internal,[51] while, as I want to add, shame will both aid and at the same time be a sign of this process. The learner, who is prone to shame, does share with society the idea that it is noble to aim at something noble, and this is the reason why he can feel shame. However, prospective shame comes about when he is about to do something bad and therefore it seems to indicate that shame prevents instead of positively promoting. The learner who is not prone to shame either does not act virtuously at all, or he acts virtuously by acting on account of a certain other emotion. More specifically, young people can act courageously due to anger and act nicely due to fear, but this is not the case in which the repetition of the action makes them good adults. If the young person performs courageous actions because he is angry, repeating these actions will not make him courageous. In other words, habituation is not a sufficient condition for forming a moral character. If the agent performs courageous actions because he feels ashamed, the repetition of these actions will make him courageous. In fact, acting out of shame depends on possessing a notion of the noble and being motivated to pursue it. Moreover, the fact that Aristotle says nowhere that, for instance, anger or fear of punishment is praiseworthy in young people might signify that shame has a special connection to the noble, bridging the gap between the learner and the future *phronimos*. The young person represents the appropriateness of shame and its value in moral upbringing. Although the young person also represents the stage in which there is neither virtue nor practical knowledge, crucially, it is still possible for him to act virtuously, and acting virtuously is a necessary condition for becoming a *phronimos*.

Let us return to the case of courageous citizens. In *EE* 3.1, Aristotle inquires into the virtue of courage. Here it is said that the courageous person is the one who faces what is truly fearful or what is fearful for the majority of the people. However, facing what is truly fearful is not sufficient for calling someone courageous. Indeed, soon Aristotle highlights that the courageous person

49 In *Problem* 9.

50 Donini 2014.

51 Shame differs from fear in that it does not merely depend on external factors such as punishments or other people's judgements.

is the one who acts courageously by going along with what the *logos* says to be noble, *kalon*. At this point, Aristotle introduces the well-known five imperfect forms of courage.[52] The first on the list is civic courage, which is motivated by shame (μία μὲν πολιτική·αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν ἡ δι' αἰδῶ οὖσα). When Aristotle focuses on the case of people courageous because of anger, the fifth on the list, he states that young people fight in a remarkable way because they are especially prone to anger. It is noteworthy that this statement is followed by the explanation of what it is to be called fearful already mentioned: something is fearful if it makes us anticipate a pain destructive of life. Aristotle is not making a superfluous remark: the pain felt by people who feel ashamed is of a different kind, because the pain they anticipate is not destructive of life. Later, Aristotle will say that people who act courageously because of shame most of all appear to be (μάλιστα φανεῖεν) virtuous.[53] This is not real courage, because the courageous person faces fearful things not because he fears disrepute, but rather because he has the habit of courage. Someone who does courageous actions out of shame merely appears to be courageous without really possessing virtue, because feeling prospective shame necessarily implies that he is about to do the wrong thing, but he is prevented from doing it. The truly courageous person, however, would immediately do the right thing, since he knows that it is right and naturally does it.[54] As we said earlier, someone who is truly courageous acts out of a habit of going along with what he positively knows to be the noble, and he does not need any inhibitory factors in order to act virtuously. The virtuous agent acts virtuously with the right motivation, knowledge, and a stable character. A discussion of courage is to be found also in the *NE*. In *NE* 3.8, already mentioned, Aristotle illustrates again the five imperfect forms of courage. As before, the first one is civic courage, the one most similar (ὡμοίωται δ' αὕτη μάλιστα) to real courage.[55] In this passage,[56] civic courage is immediately associated with citizens' courage and with the dishonour that can come about through the laws. This type of courage is the most similar to the real one due to its relation to the noble. In fact, it comes about from shame and the desire for what is noble (διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν), in the sense of the desire for honour and the desire to avoid blame, which is shameful. Shame is here related to the desire for the noble, in the sense of desiring what it is noble to desire, and to the desire to avoid what is surely not noble. This type of courage is not the real one, because

52 *EE* 3.1 1229a11–31.

53 *EE* 3.1 1230a17.

54 The fully virtuous agent acts virtuously naturally in that he acts through an inner (or internalised) principle, just like nature (*Phys.* 2.1).

55 *NE* 3.8 1116a27.

56 *NE* 3.8 1116a27–32.

acting διὰ καλοῦ ὄρεξιν is not the same as acting τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα. The former equals the desire of something they do not fully internally possess; while the latter equals the desire for something fully internalised.

To sum up: for those who are not fully virtuous, Aristotle seems to envisage a second-best option, namely acting out of shame. Performing virtuous actions is possible in several ways: from fear, from anger, and from shame. However, doing a virtuous action out of the emotion of shame is morally superior, for shame implies the grasp of the notion of noble to which the agent is internally committed, a notion which works as a main reference in his behaviour.

4 Shame in the Presence of Virtue. Does the Phronimos Feel Shame?

The *phronimos* is the practically wise man. Regardless of whether the *phronimos* can actually exist or whether he is the ideal agent of the *NE*, he is supposed to have knowledge of what is noble in each situation, to be habituated to virtue and to desire it at the same time. Since he desires the noble as the learner does, but he possesses all the virtues and is wise, he does not need any inhibitory factor. He is not about to do the wrong thing; he acts directly *meta logou* and he does it almost "naturally." These remarks are sufficient to exclude prospective shame as a motivational factor for the *phronimos*. For instance, the virtuous man does not need to appeal to shame in order to perform a courageous action but rather to the virtue of courage itself. At the end of *NE* 4.9,[57] Aristotle makes a quick comparison between continence (ἐγκράτεια) and shame: in both cases the subject knows what the wrong thing to do is and can do the right thing. The continent person performs a virtuous action by means of a sort of self-control. We do not consider the continent person to be the ideal virtuous man, because even though the *phronimos* could also choose the noble and, at the same time, have different appetites, the *phronimos* goes straight to the noble. The continent and the shamefaced are similar insofar they both fight the urge to do the wrong thing. They both succeed, and thus shame and continence are defined as "a mixture of virtue and vice."[58] We can therefore exclude that the *phronimos* acts out of shame. Virtue occurs when the agent performs an action or feels an emotion "at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way."[59] The ideal agent attends to all of these conditions, including that of the right

57 *NE* 4.9 1128b33–35.
58 *NE* 4.9 1128b34.
59 *NE* 2.6 1106b21–23.

way: he is supposed to be equipped with the relevant virtue and this is how he will perform the action, namely virtuously rather than simply out of a sense of shame. The difference between the promising learner and the well brought up adult does not depend on the other conditions: the good learner may also act at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people and with the right motive (i.e. the noble). The difference is in the way in which they both perform the good action. In fact, the promising learner performs the good action not by being virtuous (i.e. acting virtuously), but by being prone to shame, whereas the *phronimos* performs the good action through his virtues.

The next question is this: does the virtuous man at least feel shame? Here is the *aporia*: the doctrine of the mean implies that the virtuous man feels the appropriate emotion, instead of feeling the average emotion or not feeling emotions whatsoever,[60] but it seems that, in the case of shame, even to feel the appropriate emotion is bad. In *NE* 4.9, Aristotle affirms that the virtuous man does not feel shame (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐπιεικοῦς ἐστὶν ἡ αἰσχύνη), because shame is caused by bad deeds (ἐπὶ τοῖς φαύλοις):

> Shame is not even characteristic of a good man, if indeed shame is caused by bad deeds; for one ought not to do such actions (if some actions are truly shameful and others conventionally so, this makes no difference, for none of them should be done, so that shame should be felt). It is a mark of a bad man even to be such as to do anything shameful.
>
> *NE* 4.9 1128b21–26

Shame is never appropriate and praiseworthy in a well brought up adult. It would be absurd to praise an adult for being ashamed, because it would mean that he voluntarily did a base action, but adults are expected to have acquired a good and virtuous disposition so that they just do not do anything bad.[61] In this account, it is the *phronimos* who does *not* feel shame. Feeling shame and being virtuous do not go together. In the case of an adult, being prone to shame is good only hypothetically: *if* a good man were to perform a bad action, then feeling shame would be virtuous and good, while not feeling shame (shamelessness) would unquestionably be bad. In a well brought up agent, feeling shame, i.e. the appropriate emotion, is appropriate only on the hypothesis that

60 Emotions are an important part of life, even for the *phronimos*, and it is not by chance that, as per *Rhet.* 2.6 1383b14–15, shamelessness is said to be a sort of belittling and unaffectedness (ἡ δ' ἀναισχυντία ὀλιγωρία τις καὶ ἀπάθεια).

61 *NE* 4.9 1128b18–33.

he has performed (or wishes to perform)[62] some base action, but this is not supposed to happen under any circumstances. In fact, as Aristotle says also in the *Rhetoric*, people are ashamed of evils that are chiefly due to their vices (ἀπὸ κακίας)[63] or to vices of their character (τῶν τοῦ ἤθους κακιῶν).[64]

As long as the agent is young, shame is appropriate and praiseworthy. For a young agent, it is praiseworthy to hit the mean of shame. On the contrary, the good person would neither do nor think of doing something of which he would be ashamed, and this simple fact seems to rule out the possibility of feeling shame. However, Alexander's challenge is different: if shame is fear of disrepute, and disrepute could come about even without having done something shameful, then the virtuous man can also feel it. As I have tried to show, the definition of shame as fear of disrepute is meant by Aristotle to highlight the status of shame as an emotion rather than a virtue. This does not mean that it is not a valid definition: what is important to bear in mind is that shame is not a part of fear but something else. Shame is another emotion; through habituation and time it is supposed to disappear: if it does not, either the subject is shameless or not yet virtuous. Fear is not supposed to disappear, and its presence in advanced age does not mean that the person is not wise. Only by carefully distinguishing fear from shame is it possible to give shame its crucial importance in moral upbringing. The virtuous adult can feel fear, but not shame. Moreover, in *NE* 4.9 1128b23–25 Aristotle argues that the good man neither does things that are really shameful (κατ'ἀλήθειαν) nor things that are reputed shameful (κατὰ δόξαν).[65] The *phronimos*, who seems here far from ordinary people, does not do anything bad, even anything suspicious. In Alexander's discussion, the *phronimos* feels shame because there are reputed shameful deeds to which he can be related. In Aristotle's discussion, by contrast, the *phronimos* does not feel shame because he does not perform anything that could be reputed shameful.

5 Conclusions

Alexander's discussion of shame's praiseworthiness appears to be particularly fruitful. In fact, it draws attention to the relevant Aristotelian passages about shame and emphasises the relation between feeling shame and possessing a notion of the noble. This emphasis is surely needed in order to grasp the moral

62 Neither retrospective shame nor prospective shame can coexist with wisdom.
63 *Rhet.* 2.6 1383b18.
64 *Rhet*. 2.6 1384a7.
65 On conventional *aischra* see *Rhet* 2.4 1381b19–21, 30–31 and *Rhet.* 2.6 1384b24–26, 29–32.

value of the emotion of shame. As long as shame is regarded merely as respect or modesty, or as mainly related to external judgements without any special relation to the noble, it is hard to understand what makes shame an emotion *sui generis*.

However, the definition of shame as fear of disrepute is, for Alexander, not only a starting point, but also the main reference throughout the discussion. Fear and shame are treated as two species of the same kind of emotion. The difference between the two emotions is the feared object, so that the emphasis is on the disrepute. Considering shame and fear as the same kind of emotion leads to the idea that being a *phronimos* and feeling shame (fear) can go together. The upshot of this idea combined with the special connection between shame and the noble is that the most virtuous person feels shame to the highest degree.

Against this, I suggest an approach that attends to the relation between shame and the noble as does Alexander's strategy, but also highlights the differences between shame and fear as emotions. In my discussion, shame and fear are similar merely insofar as they both are episodic emotions with bodily effects. However, they are distinct emotions, and this fact is understandable because they are regarded as ethical motivations. By focusing on prospective shame, it is possible not only to understand that shame is not a species of fear, but also to confirm its special relation to the noble more strongly. The main upshot of this alternative strategy is that the *phronimos* is the most shame-less.

Alexander's *Problem* 21 arises from the need to reconcile two Aristotelian passages that seem to him in contradiction. The former states that shame is praiseworthy, whereas the latter states that shame is praiseworthy only in young people. Alexander argues that the virtuous adult also has to feel shame, i.e. to fear ill repute, and, in this way, he rejects the second passage.

The advantage of stressing the difference between fear and shame is that neither of the two passages then has to be rejected. Shame's praiseworthiness in young people is still defended: prospective shame is a good ethical motivation for those who are not yet virtuous. This does not mean that shame's praiseworthiness is absolute, as it would be in the case of a virtue. The first passage, stating that shame is praiseworthy without qualifications, occurs in a discussion in which Aristotle intends to highlight that in the case of the emotions there are also virtuous intermediates.[66] However, the only passional mean that

66 The solution proposed does not amount at rejecting the first Aristotelian passage instead of the second. The first passage does not state that shame is a virtue, i.e. that shame is praiseworthy unconditionally. It simply lists shame among emotions that one might feel within right parameters. If there is shame, there are parameters of its appropriateness. However, this does not entail that shame must morally occur.

Aristotle takes from *NE* 2.7 and discusses in *NE* 4 is shame. The aim is to clarify that shame, although it is a mean and it is praiseworthy, is an emotion. This means that shame is good only under certain conditions. As I have tried to show, the conditions under which shame is good are the conditions of those who are not yet virtuous, such as the young learner, or of those who do not possess the virtues but have a notion of the noble that they want to pursue, such as courageous citizens. However, the fully virtuous state of the *phronimos* is not one of these conditions. The virtuous man is therefore shame-less. Shame is an appropriate passional means: in the case of a virtuous man, shame is probably limited to his past.

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CHAPTER 12

The *telos* of Assimilation to God and the Conflict between *theoria* and *praxis* in Plato and the Middle Platonists

Paolo Torri

Abstract

The present article consists in an analysis of the Platonist telos of *homoiosis theoi*, with a particular focus on its link and debt to the Aristotelian ideal of the theoretical life (*bios theoretikos*). After outlining the concept of telos in ethics through its Aristotelian and Stoic origins, the present work examines the main relevant passages from Plato's dialogues (the digression in the *Theaetetus,* the last book of the *Republic*, and especially the final passage of the *Timaeus*) in which there exists a tension between the ideal of *theoria* and the necessity for *praxis* which permeates Plato's investigation of the good life. The analysis then moves to the Middle Platonist tradition (I century BCE – III century AD): all the main sources on this period are taken into account (mainly the 'handbooks' of Platonism by Alcinous and on Apuleius, but also a testimony attributed to Eudorus of Alexandria, Plutarch, the Anonymous Commentator on the *Theatetus* and Albinus). Through a thorough analysis of these sources, this work investigates the role of *praxis* in relation to *theoria* and the function of the divine paradigm in the shaping of the new ethical ideal. The aim of this study is to challenge the oversimplified characterization of Middle Platonist ethics as being completely otherworldly that has dominated scholarship so far, via a close analysis of all sources in the Platonist tradition. Conclusions are original in that they restore *praxis* as a crucial component of the Platonist perfect life, in continuity with Stoicism, and identify the divine paradigm (which corresponds to the demiurge) not as the basis for a theological and apolitical ethics, but rather as the foundation of the human possibility to gaining justice and virtue.

1 Introduction

In the *Academica Priora* Cicero observes that, ultimately, there are only two philosophical problems: on the one hand, the problem of determining the criterion of truth (*iudicium veri,* in Greek κριτήριον τῆς ἀληθείας), which is what

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guarantees the very possibility of knowing something; and, on the other hand, the ‘end of the goods’ (*finis bonorum*, in Greek τέλος ἀγαθῶν), which is the aim of life, the final goal of every human action.[1] These philosophical problems are, respectively, the epistemological and the ethical problems *par excellence*: the starting-point and the end-point of all philosophical speculation. In Early Imperial Platonism, ethical reflection is dominated by the question of the *telos,* which permeates every discussion about the good life. The doctrine of the *telos* constitutes a vantage point from which one may inquire into the connection between ethics and epistemology within the Platonic tradition. This, I shall claim, is because the ethical goal of life is strictly linked to knowledge.

In this paper, I will first briefly introduce the concept of *telos* and, more precisely, how it has been developed in the history of Greek thought. I will then focus on the correlation between the Platonist formulation of the *telos* as assimilation to god and the Aristotelian ideal of the *bios theoretikos*. Finally, I will investigate the role that *praxis* plays in pursuing the final ethical goal and the meaning of the divine paradigm in ethics.

Before delving into these investigations, however, I would like to clarify an important methodological issue. While I am perfectly aware that Imperial Platonism (also known as Middle Platonism) is far from being a unified school of thought, here I seek to provide an account of a *general* doctrine of the *telos* of assimilation to god in its historical development.[2] I will treat this as a unified doctrine, and will refer to different authors in order to tease out the various nuances such a doctrine presents. Therefore, I will neither focus on a single author, nor embark upon a systematic reconstruction of the Platonic *telos* that gives full resonance to the differences among the philosophers who endorse such a doctrine. On the contrary, my aim is to highlight the similarities and continuity characterizing the theory of the *telos* in the Middle Platonist period,

1 Cic. *Ac. Pr.* 29, 41, 17: etenim duo esse haec maxima in philosophia, iudicium veri et finem bonorum: “for (he said) the two greatest things in philosophy were the criterion of truth and the end of goods” (trans. Rackham 1972).

2 On the existence of one common ground for Platonists I take to be correct Gerson’s view as it is stated in a recent review: “that there is a single set of Platonic principles, but that there are many variations in their application since these principles are underdetermining for the solution to many if not most philosophical problems.” (Gerson 2015) I think that even the doctrine of assimilation to god as the *telos* is one of the common principles among Early Imperial Platonists. For an introduction to the Middle Platonists I suggest Dillon 1977, Donini 1982 and Bonazzi 2015. The first chapter of Michalewski 2014: 9–39, also provides a very good introduction to Middle Platonism and the recent developments of studies on this complex and fascinating period of the history of Platonic tradition. All the sources for Middle Platonism have been recently collected by Boys Stones 2017. I take this opportunity to thank Professor Boys-Stones for having allowed me to see the draft of his sourcebook before publication.

precisely because a comprehensive study of this particular topic is still lacking in the existing literature.

2 *Telos*: the Supreme End of Human Actions

The concept of the *telos* in Ethics was formalized in Hellenistic Philosophy. Long and Sedley, in their commentary on the sources of Hellenistic Philosophy, point out that in this period "the different schools were regularly characterized by their different specifications of the end."[3] Despite their differences in specifications, however, all schools could agree on a formal definition of the concept, such as we find in Stobaeus' rendering: "that for the sake of which everything is done and what is itself done for the sake of nothing else."[4]

This definition has an Aristotelian origin. In the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in a very well-known passage, Aristotle introduces the idea of a τέλος ἀγαθῶν. More specifically, at the outset of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*Et. Nic.* 1094a18–24) Aristotle postulates the existence of a τέλος τῶν πρακτῶν*,* a final end or aim of every human action, that would be the ultimate object of all desires. If such a thing exists, he claims, having knowledge (γνῶσις) of it would end up being the most important means through which we could better conduct our actions. For this reason, this τέλος τῶν πρακτῶν comes to be the *summum bonum*, the highest good (τὸ ἄριστον). Again, in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle affirms that the highest good for man corresponds to human happiness (εὐδαιμωνία) for, as Aristotle claims, "both ordinary people and people of quality" agree on this point.[5] It follows that knowledge of the *telos* is knowledge of what happiness is.

The Hellenistic notion of the τέλος ἀγαθῶν remains faithful to the Aristotelian description. It is interesting to note that the Aristotelian meaning of *telos* does not refer to something that a single man or woman decides to pursue. On the contrary, it is something that is desired *by nature* and not as the result of a rational decision. In other words, we do not decide to pursue our final end, namely happiness; rather, it simply 'happens': we cannot help pursuing

3 Cf. Long–Sedley 1987: 398.

4 SVF 3.16. The source of this fragment is Stobaeus, *Anth.* 2.77, 16–27. See also Long–Sedley 1987: 63A.

5 Arist., *Et. Nic.* 1095a, 18–20. When there is this convergence of opinions between 'ordinary people' and 'people of quality' we can be quite sure about a thesis according to Aristole's method in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. After all, he states, it would be absurd to try to reach in ethical question the same kind of certainty that we reach in mathematical inquiry.

happiness, for the very fact of tending to it is inscribed in the essence of human being. On this point, one cannot fail to remark, alongside Henry Veatch, the distance separating Aristotelian (and, in general, ancient) teleology in ethics from its modern incarnations, be these contractarian or utilitarian in character.[6] In the *Nicomachean Ethics,* after all, we do not find arguments for the thesis that human beings pursue their own happiness. Aristotle makes just two statements: (i) the first indicates that there can be an end to what we do, and it is reasonable to think so, otherwise our desire would be "empty and vain"; (ii) according to the second, there is a convergence among all men in calling this final end 'happiness'. Such a convergence of views is not the consequence of deliberation; rather, for Aristotle it is simply self-evident that every human being has this goal.

With regards to Aristotelian ethics, Gauthier has spoken of a 'duty to be happy' (as opposed to the modern 'right to be happy' of the American Constitution for example), for, the scholar claims, "man is happy when he realizes that for which he is made; and to realize that for which he is made is the *duty* of man, for it is that which reason prescribes from him."[7] This statement is at best a metaphor, since the idea of deontology as such is not at all present in Aristotle's discourse. However, it can be used to fully convey that, according to Aristotle, pursuing happiness is not a free rational choice, but rather something that our nature in a certain way 'prescribes' to us, and we follow this impulse *as if* it were a duty. Long and Sedley explain the Greek concept of *telos* with regards to the Stoics in the following way: the agreement among all Hellenistic schools on the concept of the *telos*, "was made possible by the scarcely questioned assumption that human life *must* be purposive by nature, and by the identification of the end with 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*) or 'living well' (*eu zēn*)."[8] It is not a proper duty, but something that our nature leads us to pursue regardless of our will.

However, although, on the one hand, everybody agrees on happiness being our final end, on the other hand agreement could not be found, either among different individuals (according to Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*) or among the Hellenistic schools, as to what exactly the *telos* consists of. What is the aim proper of the human being? Or, to reformulate this in light of the terms outlined above: what is human happiness? Given that the human being is *by*

6 Veatch 1981: 278.

7 Gauthier 1958: 47–48.

8 Long–Sedley 1987: 398.

nature made for happiness,[9] it is clear that to detect what happiness consists of is the most crucial ethical problem.

As Cicero points out in the fifth book of the *De finibus*, in the Platonist tradition Antiochus of Ascalon adopts the Stoic standard exhortation "to live in accordance with nature."[10] There are several versions of this formulation, attributed to the different figures from the history of Stoicism, but they are not substantively different from each other, as has been shown by Long and Sedley.[11] The main idea is that the aim of life consists in living in accordance with the correct nature, which amounts to saying in accordance with reason (intended both as one person's rationality and the rationality of the whole world). Thus, a life in accordance with reason is, for the Stoics, a life in virtue.

3 A Change of Formulation: *homoiosis theoi* and Life in Pure *theoria*

Starting from the 1st century B.C., we can observe, thanks to a few sources, a significant change in the formulation of the *telos* within the Platonist tradition. A renewed Platonist *telos* arises as a more complex ideal that, as far as we can reconstruct it from our sources, comprises both the possession and the practice of virtue as well as the ideal of a life of *theoria,* in the Aristotelian sense of the term. The well-known *formula* used by almost all the Platonists from the 1st century B.C is ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ('assimilation – or likeness, resemblance – to god as far as possible'). The first evidence of this significant change can be found in a passage in Stobaeus's *Anthologium*, which is tentatively attributed to Eudorus of Alexandria, one of the first protagonists in the 'turn to dogmatism' that happened in the Platonist tradition.[12]

Interestingly, this way of defining the *telos* of human life is apparently set in opposition to the aforementioned Stoic (and also Platonist) formulation.

9 This is a common point in ancient ethics. It is why modern philosophers call ancient ethics 'eudaimonism' (see for example Annas 1999). It is agreed, as we have shown, by all the ancient traditions that each human being naturally desires his happiness, and from this observation it is derived that happiness is the aim for which the human being exists. In this picture the main task of ethics becomes stating what happiness is and how it is possible to reach it.

10 Cic. *Fin,* 5.26.

11 Long – Sedley 1987. The sections devoted to the end are the numbers 63 and 64, 394–310.

12 Stob. 2,49,16 Wachsmuth. See the edition by Mazzarelli 1985. Eudorus is a mysterious figure, for we have almost nothing by him, but in the course of the history of interpretation scholars have attributed to him a huge number of texts. For the sake of brevity I cannot embark here in this complicated question. I refer to Bonazzi 2013 for a discussion about the attributions to Eudorus. As for this passage, I refer to Torri 2017: 218, note 6, where I argue for the rightness of the attribution of this particular passage to Eudorus.

According to this new tradition, the goal of human life does not lie only in the realization of our human nature but is, first and foremost, an exhortation to transcend our human condition in order to reach the nature of the divine. This constitutes a radical shift from Greek common sense, which exhorts us not to overcome the limits of our mortal nature (the μηδὲν ἄγαν of Greek tragedy).

This revolution is allegedly grounded in Plato's philosophy: in many passages Plato seems to consider philosophy as a way to transcend our nature and somehow to partake in the divine realm. Let us first cite the passage which has become the *locus classicus* of the doctrine, namely, the digression in the *Theaetetus*, where Plato claims:

> Ἀλλ᾽οὔτ᾽ἀπολέσθαι τὰ κακὰ δυνατόν, ὦ Θεόδωρε – ὑπεναντίον γάρ τι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἀεὶ εἶναι ἀνάγκη – οὔτ᾽ ἐν θεοῖς αὐτὰ ἱδρῦσθαι, τὴν δὲ θνητὴν φύσιν καὶ τόνδε τὸν τόπον περιπολεῖ ἐξ ἀνάγκης. διὸ καὶ πειρᾶσθαι χρὴ ἐνθένδε ἐκεῖσε φεύγειν ὅτι τάχιστα. φυγὴ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν· ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι.
>
> But it is not possible for evils to be eliminated, Theodorus – there must always exist some opposite to the good – nor can evils be established among the gods. Of necessity, it is mortal nature and our vicinity that are haunted by evils. And that is why we should also try to escape from here to there as quickly as we can. To escape is to become like god so far as is possible. And to become like god is to become just and holy, together with wisdom.
>
> PLATO, Theaetetus 176b-e, trans. SEDLEY

This passage, which is among the most well-known in Neoplatonic scholarship[13] can form the basis of any number of philosophical elaborations. Here I wish to focus on what I would claim are the passage's two most interesting conceptual identifications. Firstly, Socrates identifies the flight "from here to there"– a flight aimed at escaping the evils that inevitably characterize mortal nature – with assimilation to god. Secondly, assimilation to god is here identified with "becoming just and holy together with wisdom" (δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι). It is quite evident, at least in my view, that these two identifications raise a certain conceptual tension between, on the one hand, the ideal of a flight from the world, a flight which leads to an 'otherworldly' ethics,

13 I say this because the central idea of Neoplatonic ethics is rooted firmly in the doctrine of *homoiôsis theôi* which is founded on this passage, as Plotinus comments in *Enn.* 1, 4. See Gerson 2005: 242–243.

and, on the other hand, a more 'worldly' ethics, grounded on the possession and practice of virtue.[14]

The passage continues with some more details on god. God is characterized as the paradigm of justice, and therefore to become like god means to become "as just as possible."[15] Finally, Socrates states that the 'recognition' (γνῶσις) of this fact – that god is the paradigm of justice – is true wisdom (φόνησις) and true virtue (ἀρετή).[16]

If assimilation to god seems here to correspond to virtue and wisdom, which are notably described as a 'recognition' of the nature of the divine as the paradigm of justice, other passages suggest that ὁμοίωσις is pursuable through the '*practice* of virtue' (ἐπιτηδεύων ἀρετὴν). If we look, for example, at the last book of the *Republic*, another passage taken into consideration by the Middle Platonists, we find that:

> οὐ γὰρ δὴ ὑπό γε θεῶν ποτε ἀμελεῖται ὃς ἂν προθυμεῖσθαι ἐθέλῃ δίκαιος γίγνεσθαι καὶ ἐπιτηδεύων ἀρετὴν εἰς ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ.
>
> For assuredly that man will never be neglected by the gods, that man who is willing and eager to be just, and by practice of virtue to be likened to God so far as that is possible for man.
>
> PLATO, Respublica 613a7-b1

Even here, the emphasis is on justice and virtue, and the "practice of virtue" is the means to being likened to god. In the tenth book of the *Laws,* we find that the wise (σώφρων) man is dear to god since he is *like him*.[17]

However, in Plato's *corpus*, neither the passages we have seen nor other passages in which the idea of divinization or likeness to god is evoked[18] can be

14 See Annas 1999: 70–71 and Reydams–Schils 2017. Gerson does not agree with seeing a tension here between two kinds of ethics. Gerson 2005: 243–245. The question is complicated. If it is true that for Plato virtue does not need to be applied in practical matters in order to be virtue, for it is a state of the soul rather than a set of morally good actions, it is also true that this flight to gain knowledge of the divine realm and, in doing so, to obtain virtue, seems to be linked with a 'descent', of the philosopher into the world, a return to the cave, like, for example, what is described in *Rep*. 500d1. I will not address this problem more. On the necessity of the 'descent', see Armstrong 2003.

15 Pl. *Tht.* 176c1–3.

16 Pl. *Tht.* 176c5.

17 Pl. *Leg.* 716c–d.

18 Another important passage is in the central book of the *Republic*. (*Resp.* 500c–d). In this passage we find the same ideas we will also find in the *Timaeus*, and that is why, for the sake of synthesis, I do not include it in my short exposition. Other Platonic passages that can be taken into account, but that are not particularly interesting for my

understood to explicitly contain the Aristotelian characterization of the *telos* that underlies the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic discussion of the topic. That said, there is a passage that links τέλος, εὐδαιμονία, and the best possible life in the characteristic way in which those concepts are connected in the later debates about the *telos.* Gábor Betegh has observed that this passage, more than any other, may well have been understood by late Platonists as the definitive Platonic formulation of *telos*.[19] I consider this passage to be the most crucial source for the doctrine of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ as the *telos*, and thus that it deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

> τῷ δὲ περὶ φιλομαθίαν καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀληθεῖς φρονήσεις ἐσπουδακότι καὶ ταῦτα μάλιστα τῶν αὑτοῦ γεγυμνασμένῳ φρονεῖν μὲν ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα, ἄνπερ ἀληθείας ἐφάπτηται, πᾶσα ἀνάγκη που, καθ' ὅσον δ' αὖ μετασχεῖν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται, τούτου μηδὲν μέρος ἀπολείπειν, ἅτε δὲ ἀεὶ θεραπεύοντα τὸ θεῖον ἔχοντά τε αὐτὸν εὖ κεκοσμημένον τὸν δαίμονα σύνοικον ἑαυτῷ, διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα εἶναι. θεραπεία δὲ δὴ παντὶ παντὸς μία, τὰς οἰκείας ἑκάστῳ τροφὰς καὶ κινήσεις ἀποδιδόναι. τῷ δ' ἐν ἡμῖν θείῳ συγγενεῖς εἰσιν κινήσεις αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις ἡμῖν θείῳ συγγενεῖς εἰσιν κινήσεις αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις καὶ περιφοραί· ταύταις δὴ συνεπόμενον ἕκαστον δεῖ, τὰς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ διεφθαρμένας ἡμῶν περιόδους ἐξορθοῦντα διὰ τὸ καταμανθάνειν τὰς τοῦ παντὸς ἁρμονίας τε καὶ περιφοράς, τῷ κατανοουμένῳ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξομοιῶσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν, ὁμοιώσαντα δὲ τέλος ἔχειν τοῦ προτεθέντος ἀνθρώποις ὑπὸ θεῶν ἀρίστου βίου πρός τε τὸν παρόντα καὶ τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον.

> But if someone has committed himself entirely to learning and to true wisdom, and it is this among the things at his disposal that he has most practised, he must necessarily have immortal and divine wisdom, provided that he gets a grasp on truth. And so far as it is possible for human nature to have a share in immortality, he will not in any degree lack this. And because he always takes care of that which is divine, and has the *daimon* that lives with him well ordered, he will be supremely happy. Now for everybody there is one way to care for every part, and that is to

present argument are *Phd.* 80a3–b7, where Socrates says that the soul is more divine than the body, and therefore that it is reasonable for the soul to govern the body; and *Symp.* 207c–209e, where we find that human beings share in immortality in their own right through generation but also through virtues, poetry, and laws. Sedley notices that this passage from the *Symposium* is the "first serious brush with the idea…that god *sets the standard* for all lower life forms to emulate." (Sedley 1999: 310) However, as he notices, according to Plato all souls already possess immortality as an inalienable feature, and so "the need to strive for it [immortality] by biological, moral or intellectual procreation starts to look redundant" and, indeed, "recedes after the *Symposium*." (Sedley 1999: 311).

19 Betegh 2003: 278–283.

> grant to each part its own proper nourishments and motions. For the divine element in us, the motions which are akin to it are the thoughts and revolutions of the whole world. Everyone should take a lead from these. We should correct the corrupted revolutions in our head concerned with becoming by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the whole world, and so make the thinking subject resemble the object of his thought, in accordance with its ancient nature; And by creating this resemblance (ὁμοιώσαντα) bring to fulfilment (*telos*) the best life offered by gods to mankind for present and future time.
>
> PLATO, *Timaeus* 90B6–D7, transl. SEDLEY

This is the only passage in Plato's dialogues in which the idea (even if the *formula* does not appear) of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ is explicitly indicated as the τέλος and εὐδαιμονία. Whereas in the *locus classicus* of the digression of the *Theatetus*, the ὁμοίωσις θεῷ is said to be necessary to escape from evil, Plato never explicitly designates ὁμοίωσις θεῷ as human fulfillment and happiness.[20] Rather, in the quoted passage, the *telos* is described as a commitment to learning (φιλομαθίαν) and true wisdom (ἀληθεῖς φρονήσεις), as opposed to a life devoted to appetites (ἐπιθυμίας) or to competition (φιλονικίας). This commitment grants to man a share in immortality (μετασχεῖν ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει ἀθανασίας) "as far as it is possible" (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) and, consequently, in εὐδαιμονία, literally understood as the 'good state of the *daimon*' who lives in us. To reach this state, we have to "correct the corrupted revolutions in our head concerned with becoming by learning the harmonies and revolutions of the whole world, and in doing so make the thinking subject resemble the object of his thought." Knowledge is the key to fulfilling our *telos.*

For this reason, such a characterization of the *telos* is an anticipation of Aristotle's ideal of *theoria*: it is in virtue of the contemplation of the heavenly motions (and thus *knowledge* of them) that one can obtain "a well ordered *daimon,*" *eudaimonia*, happiness. The convergence between the notion of *telos* in the passage of the *Timaeus* and Aristotle's *theoria* becomes explicit in Middle Platonism. In the second chapter of Alcinous's *Didaskalikos* we read:[21]

20 In the aforementioned passage in the digression of the *Theaetetus* (*Tht.* 176a5–c5) the word τέλος does not appear, nor is the idea that assimilation to God is the supreme aim of human beings explicitly stated. That is why I believe that in the Middle Platonist development of the doctrine an important role must have been played by the passage at the end of the *Timaeus,* where the idea of divinization is linked with the terms τέλος and εὐδαιμονία. See Sedley 1999 and Betegh 2003.

21 Alcinous's *Didaskalikos* represents (together with Apuleius's *De Platone et eius dogmate*) the most important source for imperial Platonism. It is a handbook of Platonism written

> Ἡ ψυχὴ δὴ θεωροῦσα μὲν τὸ θεῖον καὶ τὰς νοήσεις τοῦ θείου εὐπαθεῖν τε λέγεται, καὶ τοῦτο τὸ πάθημα αὐτῆς φρόνησις ὠνόμασται, ὅπερ οὐχ ἕτερον εἴποι ἄν τις εἶναι τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὁμοιώσεως.
>
> The soul, when contemplating the divine and the intellections of the divine, is said to be in a good condition, and this condition of it is called wisdom. And that, one could say, is nothing other than assimilation to the divine.
>
> ALCINOUS, *Didaskalikos* 153, 5–6, trans. DILLON

In this passage, φρόνησις corresponds to the 'good state' (εὐπαθεῖν) of the soul while it contemplates the divine. This clearly echoes the *Timaeus* in which the contemplation of heavenly bodies is the way to acquire divine φρόνησις. Interestingly, for Alcinous, the object of contemplation is no longer the heavenly motions but explicitly "the divine" (τὸ θεῖον) and "the intellections of the divine" (τὰς νοήσεις τοῦ θείου). The 'intellections of the divine' are the Forms according to the Middle Platonic doctrine of the Forms as the thoughts of God.[22]

More specifically the supreme god, as it is described in Chapter 10 of *Didaskalikos*, is an intellect everlastingly "engaged in thinking of itself."[23] In thinking of itself, a process Alexandra Michalewski has described in her recent book, god has two main purposes and effects. First, he *actualizes* the intellect of the world soul, which is otherwise potential.[24] Secondly, and this is what is interesting for us here, he produces the Ideas, the Forms.[25] In this sense the 'intellections of the divine' are in Alcinous the Forms, for the Forms are the results of god's thinking of himself. As Michalewski has well shown, in Alcinous the Middle Platonist definition of the Forms as the thoughts of god is for the

by an otherwise unknown author. It is actually very difficult to set a date on this work; nevertheless there is agreement among scholars that it must have been written after Anthiocus of Ascalon and the 'turn to dogmatism' and before Plotinus. This amounts to say that Alcinous is a Middle Platonist. For an introduction to the author and the work see Whittaker 1990 and Dillon 1988.

22 Alcinous embraces the doctrine of the Forms as 'thoughts of god'. See Dillon 1977, Donini 1982, Dillon 1988, Whittaker 1990 and Michalewski 2014: 87–93.

23 Alc., *Did.,* 164.30.

24 The relevant passages in the *Didaskalikos* are Chapter 10 (164.7–166.14), which is dedicated to the first God, Chapter 12 (166.40–168.8), which treats of the 'generation' of the world and Chapter 14 (169.16–171.14), about the World Soul. I cannot enter into details here. For the explanation of the 'mechanism' of causality of the first god in the *Didaskalikos* I refer to Michalewski 2014: 87–91.

25 See Michalewski 2014: 91–93.

first time integrated into a theory of a god who is self-thinking.[26] The production of the Forms is the result of an act of self-knowledge performed by god.

Thus, in the quoted passage ὁμοίωσις θεῷ corresponds to contemplation of the Forms, which is true divine wisdom (φρόνησις). It is through knowledge of the divine and its intellections that we become virtuous and just, and therefore *godlike*.

4 A *theoria* Not Opposed to *praxis*

Before proceeding, let me add some important remarks. Although the passage from the *Timaeus*, in particular, and the ideal of the *similitudo* with the divine, in general, have not been adequately investigated in modern Plato scholarship,[27] Middle Platonists have no doubt that Platonic ethics aims at the ideal of god-likeness. Middle Platonists ground this understanding in many passages in Plato's dialogues, as is clear if one reads the aforementioned passage from Eudorus or Chapter 28 of the *Didaskalikos*.[28]

As Platonic commentators, therefore, Middle Platonists would have agreed with Hans Georg Gadamer who, many centuries later, claims at the outset of his studies on Plato's *Philebus* that "the true intention of Plato's dialogues can be understood only if they are conceived as an *introduction to the existential ideal of the philosopher, that is life in pure theoria.*"[29] Assimilation to God, as we have seen, can be described as a life in *theoria.* Remarkably, Middle Platonists are even more explicit than Plato in affirming that ideal life.

Nevertheless, Gadamer points out also that "this ideal is not *a-politic*." For "the turn to philosophy that occurred in Plato's life after the failure of Athenian democracy is not to be understood as an a-politic ideal."[30] Can we say the same about the Middle Platonists' view of Plato's ethics? Middle Platonism is commonly viewed as the period of the Platonic tradition when ethics becomes a-political or anti-political, metaphysical, and theological. Scholars

26 Michalewski 2014: 91.

27 As Julia Annas, for example, has noted (Annas, 1999, 53–54). There are some notable exceptions: Passmore 1970, Roloff 1970: 207–216, Neschke-Hentschke 1990, Sedley 1999, and, after Julia Anna's book, Pradeau 2003 and Lavecchia 2006.

28 The Chapter 28 of Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* threats the *telos* of *homoiosis theoi*. Right at the outset of this chapter we find references to Platonic dialogues as sources of the doctrine. Alcinous explicitly refers to Pl. *Tht.* 176a–b, *Rep.* 613a, *Phd.* 82a–b., *Leg.* 715e, *Phdr.* 248a.

29 Gadamer 1931: 6.

30 Ibidem.

have conceived this turn in ethics as either a betrayal of Plato's own intentions or the genuine fulfilment of Plato's philosophy in its historical development.[31]

In order to limit the scope of this paper, I will not assess those interpretations. Instead, taking the lead from the works of other scholars, I will challenge the oversimplified characterization of Middle Platonist ethics as completely otherworldly. According to this view, if the ethical ideal is assimilation to god, then ethics must necessarily be as otherworldly as the divine is. The fact that the ideal is often described as a life in pure *theoria* also supports such a characterization. My efforts here will not be directed to denying what I have just shown, i.e. that assimilation to god corresponds to a life of *theoria*. Rather, I intend to clarify (i) what *theoria* is in relation to *praxis*, and (ii) the function that the divine paradigm plays in ethics, with an emphasis on the questions of whether the ideal of godlikeness necessarily entails an otherworldly ethics and whether the presence of god as a paradigm necessarily signifies that an ethical theory is otherworldly.

Concerning the relationship between *theoria* and *praxis*, we have seen that Alcinous clearly affirms that the ideal of divinization corresponds to a life of pure *theoria*, and, as he explains in Chapter 2, *theoria* is superior to *praxis.*

> ὅθεν καὶ προηγούμενον καὶ τίμιον ἂν εἴη τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ εὐκταιότατον καὶ οἰκειότατον κώλυτόν τε καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῖν κείμενον καὶ τοῦ προκειμένου τέλους ἡμῖν αἴτιον. Ἡ μέντοι πρᾶξις καὶ τὸ πρακτικὸν διὰ τοῦ σώματος περαινόμενα κωλυθῆναί τε δύναται καὶ πράττοιτο ἂν παιτούντων τῶν πραγμάτων, ἃ κατὰ τὸν θεωρητικὸν βίον ὁρᾶται, μελετῆσαι εἰς ἀνθρώπων ἤθη. Ἥξει γὰρ ὁ σπουδαῖος ἐπὶ τὰ κοινά, ὁπόταν εἰδῇ κακῶς διοικούμενα πρὸς τινῶν αὐτά, περιστατικὰ μὲν οὕτως ἡγούμενος τὸ στρατηγεῖν, τὸ δικάζειν, τὸ πρεσβεύειν, ἄριστα δ' ἐν πράξει καὶ ὡς ἐν ταύτῃ προηγούμενα τὸ περὶ νομοθεσίας καὶ πολιτείας κατάστασιν καὶ παιδείαν νέων. Πρέπει δὴ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων τῷ φιλοσόφῳ μηδαμῶς τῆς θεωρίας πολείπεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἀεὶ ταύτην τρέφειν καὶ αὔξειν, ὡς ἑπόμενον δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν πρακτικὸν χωρεῖν βίον.
>
> For this reason, such a state would be of priority, valuable, most desirable and most proper to us, free from (external) hindrance, entirely within our power, and cause of the end in life which is set before us. Action, on the other hand, and the active life, being pursued through the body, are subject to external hindrance, and would be engaged in when circumstances demand, by practising the transferal to human affairs of the visions of the

31 See in particular Neschke-Hentschke 1990, where Alcinous is indicated to be a sort of founder of an a-political Platonism.

> contemplative life. For the good man will enter upon public life whenever he sees it being conducted badly by certain parties, considering as necessitated by circumstances serving as a general, or on a jury, or as an ambassador, while he would reckon best in the sphere of action, and primary on that level, such activities as lawgiving, and the establishment of constitutions, and the education of the young. It is proper, then on the basis of what we have said, for the philosopher by no means to abandon contemplation, but always to foster and develop this, turning to the practical life only as something secondary.
>
> ALCINOUS, *Didaskalikos* 153, 5–24, transl. DILLON 1993

I recently wrote an article in which I argue against a strict contraposition between *praxis* and *theoria* in Alcinous' *Didaskalikos*, taking the lead from an article by David Sedley.[32] At the beginning of the *Didaskalikos,* in Chapter 2, Alcinous distinguishes two kinds of life (the *bios praktikos* and the *bios theoretikos*) and opts for the latter. Nonetheless, as I have shown in the aforementioned article, *bios theoretikos* does not necessarily mean a life that excludes *praxis*. *Theoria* is undeniably the critical component of the *theoretikos bios* and, consequently, the philosopher should never abandon *theoria*. However, *praxis* is not opposed to *theoria* but can equally constitute an important element of the *bios theoretikos*. Alcinous' text never suggests that turning towards practical activities would imply a necessary departure from *theoria*. On the contrary, *theoria* is described as an activity that is entirely "up to us" (ἐφ' ἡμῖν). In ancient philosophy, ἐφ'ἡμῖν designates an activity that cannot be hindered by any circumstances, by any practical duty or task.[33] If *theoria* is ἐφ'ἡμῖν, then we must be able to carry out this activity even when external circumstances compel us to turn to practical affairs. Moreover, if we examine the passage more closely, we find a clear description of what *praxis* actually requires: "to instil into people's characters the things that are seen in virtue of *theoria*" (ἃ *κατὰ τὸν θεωρητικὸν βίον* ὁρᾶται, μελετῆσαι εἰς ἀνθρώπων ἤθη). As Sedley notes, "the language chosen permits, perhaps even *encourages*, a reading according to which *the contemplative life and the practical life are two concurrent aspects of the philosopher's actual life*." When he "enters the practical life, he is at that very time *continuing to live his contemplative life too*, in so far as he is drawing on the direct grasp of the transcendent Forms that philosophers alone exercise."[34]

32 Torri 2017, Sedley 2012.

33 On the notion of 'that which depends on us' I remind to Eliasson 2008, especially to Chapter 5, which is devoted to the Middle Platonists, 119–166.

34 Sedley 2012: 180.

According to such a view, *praxis* is a component of the *theoretikos bios* and should not be thought of as a departure from *theoria*. *Theoria* is not just *one* activity which is opposed to *praxis* as in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics. Theoria* is rather a constant state of the soul that characterizes the philosopher in any of his activities.

5 The Function of the Divine Paradigm in Ethics

This conclusion has an advantage: it clarifies the function that the divine paradigm plays in ethics. The institution of god as the model for human beings does not lead, as one might think at first glance, to an otherworldly ethics. On the contrary, god constitutes the model for us for the very reason that he constantly acts without abandoning *theoria*. That is precisely how the demiurge operates in the *Timaeus*: he shapes the world by looking at the *perfect paradigm* of the world.

In the Middle Platonist tradition, the divine paradigm for ethics – namely "the god we should assimilate ourselves to"– is the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*.[35] Let me provide some examples from the Middle Platonist tradition. In Chapter 23 of the *De Platone et eius dogmate* by Apuleius of Madaura, we find an exposition of the doctrine of the *telos* (*sapientiae finis*).[36] Apuleius clearly refers to the *locus classicus* of the *Theaetetus* by affirming that it is possible to resemble god by being just (*iustum*), pious (*pium*), and prudent (*prudentem*). The terminology used perfectly corresponds to Plato's words in the *Theaetetus*: *iustum* is the literal translation of δίκαιον, *pium* is ὅσιον, and *prudentem* refers to the Greek virtue of φρόνησις. However, Apuleius specifies that God not only contemplates (*cum summus deorum cuncta haec non solum cogitationum ratione consideret*) but also rules everything with his 'ordering providence' (*providae ordinationis*). Here we have the only explicit passage in the Middle Platonist tradition stating that the Platonic *telos* is a combination of the two lives, or, to put it better, a *bios theoretikos* which does not exclude but includes *praxis* as one of its components. As we have seen, we should not think that Alcinous would have disagreed with this statement.

35 I refer once again to Torri 2017 223–230. where I show how the *epouranios theos* of Chapter 28 of the *Didaskalikos* can be identified, for more than one feature with the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. See also Donini 1988. Reydams-Schils 1999 criticizes such an identification.

36 The relevant passage is Ap. *Plat.* 23.252–253.

However, Apuleius' inclusion of practical activities in the *bios theoretikos* may indicate that he is tacitly responding to a different view of the doctrine. To put it differently, Apuleius might challenge the view – possibly advocated by some other thinkers – that argues for the disjunction between *theoria* and *praxis*. It is plausible and, in my opinion, quite intriguing to interpret this passage as follows: Apuleius does not simply affirm the compossibility between *theoria* and *praxis*, he aims at rejecting the idea that assimilation to God is attainable through a merely contemplative life, utterly devoid of any practical activity. I would argue that such an interpretation is encouraged by the way in which Apuleius states this exhortation. He could have simply said: "we should pursue assimilation to god both through *theoria* and through *practice*"; instead, he puts the emphasis on *praxis* by stating that we should not pursue assimilation to god exclusively through contemplation, but also through our actions (*non solum in perspectandi cognitione, verum etiam agendi opera sequi eum convenit,*)

Even more interestingly, Apuleius first quotes the digression of the *Theaetetus* almost literally. As is well known, in this digression god is defined as the paradigm of justice. In the following sentence, Apuleius speaks about a different divinity, namely a god who governs everything with his providence (*prima, media, ultima obeat conpertaque intime providae ordinationis universitate et constantia regat*).

This god is unmistakably the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. The idea of god that Apuleius has in mind stems from two distinct sources and, accordingly, is the combination of two different, and not interchangeable, meanings of the divine: god as the paradigm of justice (taken from the *Theaetetus*) on the one hand, and the demiurge as a providential divinity (taken from the *Timaeus*) on the other.

Hence, Apuleius links the two main components that define the idea of the divine paradigm in Middle Platonist ethics. Allegedly, these are the critical features of the 'mysterious' *epouranios theos* who possesses virtue, the god to which we should assimilate ourselves, as Alcinous states in the famous passage of Chapter 28 of the *Didaskalikos*.[37] The supreme god, the *hyperouranios theos*, who corresponds to Aristotelian *nous* and therefore contemplates and does not act, being superior to virtue, is not the divinity to which our assimilation is directed.

37 Alcinous, *Didaskalikos*, 181, 43–45 θεῷ δηλονότι τῷ ἐπουρανίῳ, μὴ τῷ μὰ Δία ὑπερουρανίῳ, ὃς οὐκ ἀρετὴν ἔχει, ἀμείνων δ'ἐστὶ ταύτης (one has to liken oneself to the god in the heavens clearly, not, of course, to the god above the heavens, who does not have virtue, being superior to this).

To recapitulate: if the fulfilment of our *telos* requires us to become like god, and if god is the demiurge, then we must contemplate the forms and also strive to shape the world according to the perfection of the eternal forms. Interestingly, this is precisely what Alcinous says when he speaks about *praxis*: namely that it is something that “should be made whenever circumstances require that one practices in men’s characters the things that are seen in virtue of *theoria* (ἃ κατὰ τὸν θεωρητικὸν βίον ὁρᾶται).”

The commitment to *praxis* does not prevent the philosopher from conducting the *bios theoretikos,* so long as he maintains a gaze on the forms *in the same way* that the divine can (and does) set in order the *cosmos* in its contemplation of the forms.

6 Assimilation to God as the Foundation of Justice

So far, we have seen that: (i) the concept of the *telos* in Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic terms comes from Aristotle and corresponds to human happiness, the aim and the fulfilment of human life; (ii) the new Platonist *telos* of *homoiosis theoi* that shows up within the Platonist tradition around the 1st century BC somehow corresponds to a life of *theoria*; (iii) the *theoretikos bios* in Middle Platonist renderings does not exclude *praxis,* which is, indeed, a component of a contemplative life; and (iv) the divine paradigm is the demiurge of the *Timaeus,* a divinity who not only contemplates but also acts in accordance with his conception of justice and providential care for the world.

We can then raise another question: is *praxis* an essential component of pursuing our final goal (the *telos*) or is it just contingently necessary to engage in practical activities, according to the dictates of circumstance? From Alcinous’ aforementioned passage, we might think that, for a Middle Platonist, *praxis* is just a necessity and, at least sometimes, the fulfilment of life can be pursued through the mere contemplation of the Forms. If this were the case, we would have only partially restored *praxis* as a component of philosophical life. For *praxis* would remain only a necessity dictated by the circumstances and the ethical ideal of the assimilation to god wouldn’t be necessarily practical.

The vast majority of scholars draw this conclusion, a conclusion that I intend to challenge by analyzing a text that, among the Middle Platonic sources for the doctrine of *homoiosis theoi* as human *telos*, best explicates the reason that this doctrine was developed. The text I am referring to is the Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s *Theaetetus*, which, unfortunately, contains only a cursory allusion to the *homoiosis theoi.* Nevertheless, this allusion is of

paramount importance in understanding why Platonists have introduced the new *formula* of assimilation to God. The reason is to ground justice, which cannot be grounded in human nature. The text reads:

> ὅθ̣ε̣ν οὐκ -
> πὸ τῆς οἰκει̣ώσεως
> εἰσάγει ὁ Πλάτων τὴν δι-
> [κα]ι̣οσύν̣ην, λλὰ -
> π̣ὸ̣ τῆς π̣ρ̣[ὸ]ς τὸ̣ν̣ θ̣ε̣-
> ὸν ὁμοιό̣[τητο]ς̣ δεί-
> ξ̣ομεν.
>
> Therefore, Plato did not introduce justice by deriving it from *appropriation* (*oikeiosis*), but from assimilation to God.
>
> ANON. *In Tht.* 7, 14–20

Justice is only possible by means of assimilation to God. Given the egoism inherent in human nature that has been described before in the commentary, justice must lie in something else, in a superior or divine being. In opposition to the Stoic doctrine of appropriation, which considers justice as an intrinsic human attitude, justice is irreducible to a mere human feature.

This position is quite original because, in the other passages, Middle Platonists seem to endorse the opposite stance – that is, that one needs to be virtuous in order to be assimilated to god. Here, instead, assimilation to god is the *conditio sine qua non* to be just, the *condition of possibility* of being just, much in the way that the *kriterion* is the condition of possibility of knowledge.

Accordingly, the introduction of a divine paradigm does not lead to embracing an otherworldly ethics. On the contrary, the divine model is the condition of possibility for human nature to be just with regards to others. This reveals the social character of the divine paradigm since it rests on the presence of others. Therefore, our *telos* comprehends *praxis* and is not just accomplished through a life of pure *theoria*. One might object as follows: *praxis* needs *theoria* to be correctly performed, but *theoria* can stand even without *praxis*. This is absolutely true. Nevertheless, my point is not that *praxis* is necessary for *theoria* but that it is necessary to fulfil our *telos*: if it were possible to conduct a life in pure *theoria,* such a life would not allow us to fully fulfil our final end, to pursue a complete assimilation to the divine, which would correspond to our happiness.

Moreover, one might ask how a life of contemplation and an ethical or just life might stand altogether. In the Middle Platonist tradition, there are many attempts to address this question. Overall, the ideal of *theoria* seems to indicate

a striving towards a pure knowledge that renders human beings virtuous. In Albinus' *Prologus*, this position is sharply illustrated:

> ἐπεὶ δὲ δεῖ καὶ ἐν γνώσει τῶν θείων γενέσθαι, ὡς δύνασθαι κτησάμενον τὴν ἀρετὴν ὁμοιωθῆναι αὐτοῖς, ἐντευξόμεθα τῷ Τιμαίῳ.
>
> We will read the *Timaeus*, for it is necessary to obtain knowledge of divine things so as to be able, having acquired virtue, to assimilate oneself to that.
>
> ALBINUS, *Prologus* 150, 8–10

Albinus recommends reading the *Timaeus* in order to obtain knowledge of divine things, thereby acquiring virtue and proceeding towards a complete assimilation to god.

This is why Tarrant[38] proposes the hypothesis that the commentary offers an *epistemological* interpretation of the doctrine of assimilation to god. According to this perspective, such assimilation concerns a divinity that is, first and foremost, omniscient and requires obtaining proper knowledge of the divine. Knowledge of 'divine things' is knowledge of the forms, which, as Alcinous' passage makes clear, are god's own intellections. As a result, it is knowledge of god's intellections that makes human beings virtuous. In a very Platonic or even Socratic way, ethics is ultimately based on knowledge and, more specifically in the Middle Platonist tradition, on the knowledge of the forms.

However, one might rightly observe that, even once the knowledge of the divine has been grasped, the *telos* remains unfulfilled. If *theoria* has an end – knowledge of divine things has to be pursued *in order to* gain virtue – *theoria* cannot be the *telos* according to the Aristotelian and Stoic definitions we saw at the beginning. For the *telos* is, by definition, the *final* end, desired exclusively for its own sake. Rather, the *telos* would be *that for which knowledge of the divine is pursued*, namely virtue, which is the true aim of *theoria*. In light of these considerations, we can make sense of many passages in the Middle Platonist tradition, *in primis* the first appearance of the doctrine of the *telos* as *homoiôsis theo*, preserved in Stobaeus' *Anthologium* and commonly attributed to Eudorus of Alexandria. Here we find the following statement:

> Σωκράτης, Πλάτων ταὐτὰ τῷ Πυθαγόρᾳ, τέλος ὁμοίωσιν θεῷ. Σαφέστερον δ'αὐτὸ διήρθρωσε Πλάτων προσθεὶς τὸ 'κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν', φρονήσει δ'ἐστὶ μόνως δυνατόν, τοῦτο δ'ἦν τὸ κατ'ἀρετὴν<ζῆν>.

38 Tarrant 1985: 78–79.

> Socrates and Plato agree with Pythagoras in saying that the *telos* is assimilation to god. Plato explains it more clearly by adding 'as far as it is possible'; and it is possible just with intelligence and that would be the *life in accordance to virtue*.
>
> STOBAEUS, *Anth.* 2, 49, 16 WACHSMUTH

In accordance with other texts,[39] I suggest a translation of φρόνησις as 'intelligence' in this passage. Here, indeed, φρόνησις clearly denotes the faculty (and not the state of mind) by means of which it is possible (δυνατόν) to become like god. If to become like god requires obtaining proper knowledge of god, then assimilation is possible only by means of φρόνησις, our *intelligence*. However, knowledge of god is knowledge of the Good and, consequently, corresponds to virtue.

In Plutarch's *De sera numinis vindicta* we even find a perfect coincidence between *homoiosis theoi* and human virtue.[40] In continuity with the digression of the *Theaetetus*, god is set as the "paradigm of every good" (παράδειγμα πάντων καλῶν). In this way, we can attain human virtue only by knowing god, and virtue here literally coincides with assimilation to god (τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἀρετήν, ἐξομοίωσιν οὖσαν ἁμωσγέπως πρὸς αὐτόν).

The second part of the passage is an exegesis of Plato's *Timaeus* and, more specifically, of the passage we read at the beginning of this paper. In Plutarch's reading of the *Timaeus*, nature has kindled vision in us, and, in doing so, has made *theoria* possible, in order for us to "become settled in virtue" (εἰς ἀρετὴν καθίστασθαι). "For man is fitted to derive from god no greater blessing than to become settled in virtue through copying and aspiring to the beauty and the goodness that are his."[41] *Theoria* aims to pursue virtue, the true *final end*.[42]

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39 I hereby refer to the *locus classicus* of the *Theaetetus* (176b2) in particular, which also represents the main reference for the author of the passage. See Ferrari 2011: 364 n. 2: "La *phronesis* non è semplicemente una virtù che si affianca alla giustizia e alla pietà, ma rappresenta il fulcro del processo di acquisizione di ogni virtù, perché solo il riferimento alla conoscenza consente di interiorizzare il possesso di qualsiasi virtù." The *phronesis* is intelligence equipped with the knowledge that makes the possession of the other virtues possible, and, in this sense, we may say it is a faculty by which it is possible to gain the virtues, hence become like god. On the notion of *phronesis* see also Ibánez–Puig 2007: 184–186 and Stern 2008: 177.

40 Plut. *De ser. num. vind.* 550d1–e5.

41 Plut. *De ser. Num. vind.* 500e.

42 On this passage from Plutarch much has been written, for it is supremely interesting both for the comprehension of the doctrine of *homoiosis theoi* (it represents the only passage in Plutarch's *corpus* in which the *formula* literally appears) and for the more general theme of Plutarch's exegesis of the *Timaeus*. I cannot enter into details here, but I limit

7 Conclusion

The final end of life is not only *theoria*, but *theoria* is aimed in its turn at obtaining virtue. Virtue corresponds to assimilation to god. But, if things are thus, then there is no substantial difference between the Stoic formulation of the *telos* as living according to virtue and the new Platonist one. On the contrary, and as I have shown, the divine paradigm functions to guarantee a more solid ground for making an ethics of virtue really possible. The difference between the Stoic and the Platonist *telos* (at least until Plotinus) is not the different consideration of practical virtue, but rather a different foundation for it. The Stoics think that human virtue is a natural attitude, a development of *oikeiosis*. Platonists, in contrast, are more pessimistic about human nature, which they believe is not enough to pursue virtue. That is the real reason for which they introduce a divine paradigm: not to 'escape' from practical virtue but, rather, to make it genuinely possible.

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myself to referring to Helmig 2005, in particular 15–27. Franco Ferrari also made several important contributions on Plutarch's notion of the divine. I refer in particular to Ferrari 1996: 395–409.

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CHAPTER 13

Wissen und Meinung im anonymen Theaitetoskommentar

Bernd Hene

Abstract

The Anonymous Commentary on Plato's *Theaetetus*, written by a Middle Platonic author between c. 45 B.C. and A.D. 150, is the only surviving ancient commentary on this Platonic dialogue. At the center of the anonymous commentator's interpretation of the *Theaetetus* stands the thesis that the dialogue is investigating a specific kind of knowledge, viz. the so-called "simple knowledge." The present paper examines this central concept in the commentator's epistemology by analyzing several passages from the commentary in which the "simple knowledge" and related concepts are discussed. This study reveals the following results: By the term "simple knowledge" the anonymous author designates the basic units of knowledge in sciences like geometry and music theory. The commentator concedes that the *Theaetetus* does not succeed in defining this kind of knowledge. But this does not pose a problem for the author since he is firmly convinced that Plato, when writing the *Theaetetus,* had already established a definition of "simple knowledge," viz. in the famous passage *Meno* 98a where Socrates explains the difference between right opinion and knowledge. According to the commentator, the *Theaetetus* is moving slowly but steadily towards this definition, which is suppressed at the end of the dialogue only for didactical reasons. Remarkably, the commentator does not use the expression αἰτίας λογισμῷ ("by reasoning about the cause") but αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ ("by the cause of reasoning") when quoting the definition he extracts from *Meno* 98a. However, this difference does not seem to have any influence on his interpretation of the definition, since he argues that the definition amounts to the proposition that we know *p* when we know not only *that p* but also *why p*. Like the Platonic Socrates in *Meno* 98a, the commentator identifies the binding of right opinions with recollection, and accordingly he holds that "simple knowledge" is acquired by recollection. The epistemological prerequisite for acquiring "simple knowledge" through recollection are the so-called "natural notions" (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι), which the commentator (in Middle Platonic fashion) identifies with the memory traces resulting from the soul's pre-carnate vision of the Forms. It is the task of the maieutic teacher to "unfold" and "articulate" these natural notions. When this is accomplished, the

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embodied soul can grasp the true causes of things and thereby convert right opinions into "simple knowledge."

1 Einleitung

Die Frage nach dem Verhältnis von *Wissen* (ἐπιστήμη) und *Meinung* (δόξα) zählt zu den zentralen Problemen der platonischen Epistemologie. Dies kann man schon dem Umstand entnehmen, dass Platon diese schwierige Frage in seinen Dialogen höchst unterschiedlich beantwortet:[1] In den mittleren Büchern der *Politeia* werden Wissen und Meinung als kognitive Zustände bestimmt, denen unterschiedliche Erkenntnisobjekte zugeordnet sind: Wissen ist auf die ewigen und unveränderlichen Ideen gerichtet, wohingegen die Sinnesdinge, die sich zwischen Sein und Nichtsein befinden, Gegenstand der Meinung sind.[2] Im *Menon* wird der Unterschied zwischen Wissen und wahrer Meinung hingegen anders bestimmt: So behauptet der platonische Sokrates in *Men.* 98a, dass sich Wissen und wahre Meinung nur dadurch unterscheiden, dass Wissen im Gegensatz zur wahren Meinung stabil in der Seele verankert sei, weil nämlich der Wissende in der Lage ist, Gründe für seine Überzeugung anzugeben.[3] Schon in der Antike haben Platoninterpreten aus dieser Passage eine platonische Definition der ἐπιστήμη entwickelt. Ein wichtiges Zeugnis für diese Praxis ist der anonyme Kommentar zu Platons *Theaitetos*. In dieser Schrift eines unbekannten Platonikers wird der Wissensdefinition in *Men.* 98a eine zentrale Bedeutung für die platonische Epistemologie zugesprochen. Wie aber integriert ein antiker Platoniker diese Definition in seine Deutung der platonischen Epistemologie? Wie bringt er sie in Einklang mit der strikten Kontrastierung von Wissen und Meinung in den mittleren Büchern der *Politeia*? Um diese Fragen zu beantworten, soll in vorliegendem Beitrag ein zentraler Begriff der Epistemologie des anonymen Kommentators untersucht werden: nämlich der Begriff des sog. „einfachen Wissens" (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ).

Diese Untersuchung gliedert sich in drei Schritte: In einem ersten Schritt soll zunächst die These des Anonymus erläutert werden, dass Platon im *Theaitetos* das „einfache Wissen" (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ) untersucht (Abschnitt 3). Anschließend soll dann dargestellt werden, dass der Kommentator die Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Wesen des „einfachen Wissens" nicht im *Theaitetos*, sondern im

1 Vgl. Sedley 1996a: 300.
2 Vgl. insb. *Resp*. 5. 475e–480a.
3 Vgl. Grundmann 2008: 87; Hallich 2013: 182.

Menon findet, nämlich in der bereits erwähnten Passage *Men.* 98a (Abschnitt 4). In einem dritten und letzten Schritt wird die Frage erörtert, welche Rolle die Anamnesislehre in der Epistemologie des Anonymus spielt, v.a. im Zusammenhang mit dem Erwerb des „einfachen Wissens" (Abschnitt 5). Bevor diese Untersuchung in Angriff genommen wird, sollen aber zunächst einige Grundinformationen zum anonymen Theaitetoskommentar und zu seinem Verfasser gegeben werden.

2 Grundinformationen zum anonymen Theaitetoskommentar

Der anonyme Kommentar zu Platons *Theaitetos*[4] ist (leider nur fragmentarisch) auf einem Papyrus des zweiten nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts überliefert, der um das Jahr 1901 in Ägypten entdeckt wurde (PBerol 9782).[5] Leider ist es bis heute nicht gelungen, den Verfasser des Kommentars zu identifizieren, was u.a. darin begründet liegt, dass jene Teile des Papyrus verloren sind, die Angaben zum Titel und Verfasser der Schrift enthalten haben dürften.[6] Aufgrund der ungeklärten Verfasserfrage ist die genaue Abfassungszeit des Kommentars in der Forschung umstritten.[7] Als sicher kann allerdings gelten, dass der Kommentar zwischen ca. 45 v. Chr. und 150 n. Chr. verfasst worden ist.[8] Die Frage der philosophischen Zugehörigkeit des Autors lässt sich hingegen ohne Schwierigkeiten beantworten: Der Autor des Kommentars ist das, was wir heute einen „Mittelplatoniker" nennen.[9] Dies kann man dem Umstand entnehmen, dass

4 Im Jahre 1905 erschien in der Reihe *Berliner Klassikertexte* die erste Edition des Theaitetoskommentars, die von Hermann Diels und Wilhelm Schubart angefertigt wurde (Diels – Schubart 1905). 90 Jahre nach der Veröffentlichung dieser *editio princeps* wurde im *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini* eine zweite Edition des Kommentars publiziert, die eine Gemeinschaftsarbeit von Guido Bastianini und David N. Sedley ist (Bastianini – Sedley 1995). Diese zweite Edition bildet die Textgrundlage für die in diesem Beitrag erörterten Passagen aus dem anonymen Theaitetoskommentar.

5 Vgl. Diels – Schubart 1905: v; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 235.

6 Zur Frage nach der Identität des Verfassers vgl. insb. Diels – Schubart 1905: xxiv–xxxvii; Tarrant 1983; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 251–254.

7 Diels – Schubart (1905: xxiv–xxv) plädieren für eine Abfassung des Kommentars im 2. Jh. n. Chr., wohingegen Tarrant (1983: 167–187) und Bastianini – Sedley (1995: 254–256) nachzuweisen suchen, dass der Kommentar schon gegen Ende des 1. Jh. v. Chr. verfasst wurde. Opsomer (1998: 35–36), Brittain (2001: 249–254) und Bonazzi (2003b: 44–59) bringen allerdings überzeugende Argumente gegen diese Frühdatierung vor und sprechen sich für eine Abfassung in der ersten Hälfte des 2. Jh. n. Chr. aus.

8 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 246–247; Tarrant 2005: 135.

9 Vgl. Invernizzi 1976: 215; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 246–247.

er sich (a) zu einer Reihe von Lehren bekennt, die für den Mittelplatonismus kennzeichnend sind,[10] und (b) zudem keinen Zweifel aufkommen lässt, dass er Platons Philosophie für den Inbegriff der Wahrheit hält.[11]

Wie schon erwähnt, ist der Kommentar nur fragmentarisch überliefert: Erhalten ist nur ein Großteil (insgesamt 75 Kolumnen) der *ersten* Papyrusrolle eines aus mehreren Rollen bestehenden Gesamtwerks.[12] Der erhaltene Teil beginnt mit einer kurzen Einleitung, in der u.a. die Frage nach dem *skopos* des *Theaitetos* erörtert wird, und endet – wenn man eine Reihe von Fragmenten vernachlässigt – mit dem Kommentar zu *Tht.* 153d–e. Der Theaitetoskommentar ist ein *fortlaufender*, *lemmatischer* Kommentar, d.h., der Verfasser wählt, am Text des *Theaitetos* entlanggehend, erläuterungsbedürftige Passagen aus, die er vollständig ausschreibt und dann anschließend paraphrasiert und/oder kommentiert. Neben dem Theaitetoskommentar hat der Anonymus noch weitere (leider verlorene) Platonkommentare geschrieben: Im erhaltenen Teil verweist der Autor auf seine bereits verfassten Kommentare zum *Timaios* (35,10–12)[13] sowie zum *Symposion* (70,10–12) und kündigt zudem einen Kommentar zum *Phaidon* (48,7–11) an.

Der Kommentator ist ein unitarischer Leser der platonischen Dialoge,[14] d.h., er fasst das *Corpus Platonicum* als ein organisches Ganzes auf, in dem es weder Entwicklung noch Widersprüche gibt. Aus diesem Grund fühlt er sich berechtigt, Theorien anderer Dialoge in den *Theaitetos* hineinzulesen. Dies wird die Untersuchung der Epistemologie des anonymen Kommentators zeigen, der wir uns nun zuwenden.

3 Der *Theaitetos* als Untersuchung des „einfachen Wissens“ (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ)

Einen wichtigen Einblick in die Epistemologie des Anonymus gibt schon die Einleitung des Kommentars, die zwar relativ kurz, aber dennoch in mehrfacher Hinsicht aufschlussreich ist. Epistemologisch relevant sind dabei v.a. die Ausführungen zum *skopos* (2,11–52) und zum Argumentationsverlauf des Dialogs (2,52–3,25). In seiner Erörterung der Frage nach dem *skopos* des

10 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 249.
11 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 247.
12 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 239.
13 Die Passagen aus dem anonymen Theaitetoskommentar werden durch Angabe der Kolumnen- und Zeilenzahl des PBerol 9782 zitiert.
14 Vgl. Bonazzi 2013: 311; El Murr 2013: 154.

Theaitetos beschränkt sich der Anonymus nicht darauf, seine eigene Meinung darzustellen, sondern entwickelt diese vielmehr im Rahmen einer kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit alternativen Deutungen. Aus diesem Grund erfahren wir in dieser Passage nicht nur, wie der Anonymus die Frage nach dem *skopos* beantwortet, sondern auch, wie seine exegetischen Konkurrenten (entweder Zeitgenossen oder Vorgänger) dabei verfahren sind. In 2,11–23 referiert und widerlegt er zunächst die These einer anonymen Gruppe von „Platonikern“:

> Einige Platoniker aber waren der Ansicht, der Dialog behandle das Kriterium (τῶν δὲ Πλατωνικῶ[ν] τινες ᾠήθησ[αν περ]ὶ κριτηρίου εἶ[ναι] τ[ὸ]ν διάλογον), weil auch die Untersuchung über diesen Gegenstand weiten Raum einnimmt (ἐπ[ε]ὶ καὶ πλεονάζει ἐν τῇ περὶ τούτου σκέψει). Das ist aber nicht richtig; vielmehr ist als Aufgabe festgesetzt, über das einfache und nicht zusammengesetzte Wissen zu sprechen (τὸ δ᾽ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει, ἀλλὰ πρόκειται περὶ ἐπιστήμης εἰπ[ε]ῖν τ[ῆ]ς ἁ[πλ]ῆς καὶ ἀσ[υ]νθέτου). Und zu diesem Zweck untersucht er [sc. Platon] notwendigerweise das Kriterium (εἰς τοῦτο δὲ ἀν[α]γκαίως περὶ κριτηρί[ο]υ σκοπεῖ).[15]

Nach Auffassung der hier erwähnten „Platoniker“[16] ist die zentrale Frage des *Theaitetos* nicht „Was ist Wissen?“ (τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη;), sondern vielmehr „Was ist das Kriterium?“, d.h., der Dialog wird als eine Untersuchung des *Wahrheitskriteriums* aufgefasst.[17] Der Anonymus hält diese These für verfehlt: Er räumt zwar ein, dass Platon im *Theaitetos auch* das „Kriterium“ untersucht, doch weist er ausdrücklich darauf hin, dass diese Erörterung des „Kriteriums“ dem eigentlichen *skopos* des Dialogs untergeordnet sei, nämlich der Untersuchung der Frage „Was ist Wissen?“. Diese Frage muss nach Auffassung des Kommentators aber näher qualifiziert werden: Der Anonymus ist nämlich der Überzeugung, dass im *Theaitetos* eine *spezifische Form des Wissens* untersucht wird, die der Kommentator als „einfaches und nicht zusammengesetztes Wissen“ (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ καὶ ἀσύνθετος) bezeichnet.[18] Bemerkenswerterweise fühlt sich der Anonymus nicht dazu veranlasst, seinem Leser an dieser Stelle zu erläutern, was unter dem „einfachen Wissen“ genau zu verstehen ist.

15 Die Übersetzungen in diesem Beitrag sind, sofern nicht anders angegeben, meine eigenen.

16 In Fr. D, 14–19 behauptet der Anonymus, dass sogar die „Mehrheit der Platoniker“ ([τοὺ]ς πλείους τῶ[ν Πλ]ατωνικῶ[ν]) diese Auffassung zum *skopos* des *Theaitetos* vertrete. Vgl. Opsomer 1998: 37 Anm. 38.

17 Vgl. Opsomer 1998: 37–38.

18 Vgl. Tarrant 1985: 85–86; Bonazzi 2003a: 186–187; Tarrant 2005: 137.

Man muss aber weder spekulieren noch auf mittelplatonische Paralleltexte zurückgreifen,[19] um die Frage zu beantworten, was der Anonymus unter dem „einfachen Wissen“ versteht, da er den Begriff noch an weiteren Stellen seines Kommentars thematisiert.[20] Bevor diese Passagen untersucht werden, soll aber zunächst der Gedankengang der Einleitung weiterverfolgt werden. Der Anonymus beschäftigt sich in seiner Erörterung des *skopos* nämlich noch mit einer weiteren Theorie zum Untersuchungsgegenstand des *Theaitetos*.[21] In 2,32–39 führt der Anonymus Folgendes aus:

> Jedoch behaupten einige, dass er [sc. Platon], nachdem er sich zur Aufgabe gemacht habe, das Wissen zu untersuchen, im *Theaitetos* zeige, auf welche Dinge es [sc. das Wissen] sich nicht bezieht, im *Sophistes* aber, auf welche Dinge es sich bezieht (ἀλλ’ ἔ[νιοί][22] φασιν αὐτὸν περὶ ἐπιστήμης προθέμενον ζητ[εῖν] ἐν μὲν τῷ Θεαιτήτῳ περὶ ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν δεικνύναι, ἐν δὲ τῷ Σοφιστῇ περὶ ἃ ἔστιν).

Der Anonymus überliefert an dieser Stelle eine faszinierende Deutung der beiden Dialoge *Theaitetos* und *Sophistes*, nach der diese Dialoge ein epistemologisches Doppelwerk[23] bilden: Der erste Teil dieses Doppelwerks, also der *Theaitetos*, ist ein rein negativer Beitrag zur Untersuchung der Wissensfrage, insofern dieser Dialog lediglich aufzeigt, welche Dinge *nicht* das Objekt der ἐπιστήμη sind, nämlich die Sinnesdinge. Erst im zweiten Teil, also im *Sophistes*, wird die Wissensfrage positiv beantwortet, insofern dieser Dialog die eigentlichen Objekte der ἐπιστήμη präsentiert, nämlich die Ideen.[24] Die Vertreter dieser *skopos*-Theorie deuten die beiden Dialoge *Theaitetos* und *Sophistes* somit im Lichte der in der *Politeia* dargestellten Unterscheidung zwischen ἐπιστήμη und

19 Der Begriff des „einfachen Wissens“ (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ) findet sich auch im epistemologischen Kapitel des *Didaskalikos* von Alkinoos und wird dort expressis verbis Platon zugeschrieben (vgl. *Did.* 4, 155,32–36 Whittaker – Louis). Vgl. hierzu Dillon 1993: 68.

20 Vgl. Bonazzi 2003a: 187.

21 Vgl. Tarrant 2000: 167–168.

22 An dieser Stelle folge ich ausnahmsweise Diels – Schubart (1905: 3), die für den Anfang der stark zerstörten Zeile 2,32 die Lesart ἔ[νιοι] vorschlagen. Bastianini – Sedley (1995: 264–265) plädieren hingegen für die Lesart οὗτ[οι]. Nach dieser Lesart wird die in 2,32–39 referierte Theorie durch das Demonstrativpronomen οὗτοι den in 2,11–12 erwähnten „Platonikern“ zugeschrieben. Vgl. hierzu auch Tarrant 2000: 167–169.

23 Vgl. Bonazzi 2013: 312–313.

24 Vgl. Bastianini–Sedley 1995: 250–251; Sedley 1996b: 89–90. Sedley (1996b: 90) bezeichnet diese Deutung als „‘object-related’ interpretation, since it takes Plato to define knowledge in terms of its objects, the Forms“.

δόξα.[25] Man darf also annehmen, dass es sich auch bei der zweiten Exegetengruppe um Anhänger der platonischen Philosophie handelt.

Der Anonymus beurteilt die zweite *skopos*-Theorie weitaus positiver als die These der zuvor erwähnten „Platoniker“, kann ihr aber dennoch nicht zustimmen. Dies zeigt sich in 2,39–52:

> Daher sind sie der Wahrheit zwar nahegekommen,[26] haben sie aber nicht getroffen (προσῆλθον μὲν οὖν ἐγγύς, οὐ μὴν ἔτυχον τἀληθοῦς). Denn er [sc. Platon] untersucht nicht die Materie, mit der sich das Wissen beschäftigt, sondern [er untersucht], was dessen [sc. des Wissens] Wesen ist (οὐ γὰρ ζητεῖ τὴν ὕλην περ[ὶ] ἣν στρέφεται ἡ [ἐ]π[ι]στήμη, ἀλλὰ τίς οὐσ[ί]α αὐτῆς). Letzteres ist nämlich von Ersterem verschieden, wie im Falle der Künste die Untersuchung des Wesens jeder einzelnen [Kunst] von der Untersuchung der Materie, mit der sie sich beschäftigen, verschieden ist (ἕτερον δέ ἐστιν τοῦτο ἐκείνου, ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν τεχνῶν ἄλλο μέν ἐστιν τὸ ζητεῖν ἑκάστης τὴν οὐσίαν, ἄλλο δὲ τὸ τὴν ὕλην, περὶ ἣν πραγματεύονται).

Wie diese Ausführungen zeigen, lehnt der Anonymus die *skopos*-Theorie der zweiten Gruppe aus folgendem Grund ab: Platon, so der Kommentator, beschäftigt sich im *Theaitetos* nicht mit der „Materie“ (ὕλη) des Wissens, d.h. mit den *Objekten des Wissens*, sondern vielmehr mit der Frage, *was das Wesen* (οὐσία) des Wissens ist. Daher ist es nach Auffassung des Kommentators nicht zutreffend, wenn man – wie die zweite Exegetengruppe – behauptet, dass Platon im *Theaitetos* zeige, auf welche Dinge sich die ἐπιστήμη *nicht bezieht*. Es zeigt sich also, dass der Anonymus (wie der platonische Sokrates in *Tht.* 146e7–10) strikt zwischen der Frage „Was ist Wissen?“ (τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη;) und der Frage „Worauf bezieht sich das Wissen?“ (τίνος ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη;) differenziert.[27] Dieser Differenzierung kann man eine wichtige epistemologische Überzeugung des Anonymus entnehmen: Es ist seiner Meinung nach nicht möglich,

25 Eine solche Interpretation der beiden Dialoge *Theaitetos* und *Sophistes* wird in der Neuzeit von Francis M. Cornford vertreten (vgl. insb. Cornford 1935: 12 u. 28). Vgl. hierzu auch Sedley 1996b: 90; 2004: 4.

26 Das Zugeständnis des Anonymus lässt sich wohl folgendermaßen erklären: Die Vertreter der zweiten *skopos*-Theorie sind der Wahrheit insofern nahegekommen, als sie im Gegensatz zu den in 2,11–12 erwähnten „Platonikern“ nicht der Auffassung sind, dass der *Theaitetos* eine Untersuchung des Wahrheitskriteriums ist.

27 Vgl. *Tht.* 146e7–10: τὸ δέ γ᾽ ἐρωτηθέν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, οὐ τοῦτο ἦν, τίνων ἡ ἐπιστήμη, οὐδὲ ὁπόσαι τινές· οὐ γὰρ ἀριθμῆσαι αὐτὰς βουλόμενοι ἠρόμεθα ἀλλὰ γνῶναι ἐπιστήμην αὐτὸ ὅτι ποτ᾽ ἐστίν; s. hierzu Sedley 1996b: 94.

die *Frage nach dem Wesen des Wissens* einfach dadurch zu beantworten, dass man die *Objekte des Wissens* angibt, d.h. Wissen unter Angabe seiner Objekte definiert.[28]

In seinem Aufsatz „Three Platonist Interpretations of the *Theaetetus*" vertritt David Sedley die Auffassung, dass man den Ausführungen des Anonymus in 2,39–52 entnehmen könne, wie der Anonymus das (für einen Unitarier schwerwiegende) Problem gelöst hat, dass die Ideen im *Theaitetos* nicht als Objekte der ἐπιστήμη bestimmt werden. Nach Sedley konnte er das Problem einfach durch den Hinweis lösen, dass im *Theaitetos* nicht die Objekte der ἐπιστήμη behandelt werden.[29] Es gibt allerdings gute Gründe, dieser These Sedleys nicht vorschnell zuzustimmen, und zwar aus folgendem Grund: Wie wir schon gesehen haben, ist der Anonymus der Überzeugung, dass im *Theaitetos* eine *bestimmte Form des Wissens* untersucht wird, nämlich das „einfache Wissen" (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ). Es stellt sich daher die Frage, ob die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ ein Wissen ist, das auf die Ideen bezogen ist, wie dies Sedley anzunehmen scheint. Um diese Frage beantworten zu können, muss der Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145c7–8 genau untersucht werden.

In *Tht.* 145c7–8 stellt Sokrates seinem Gesprächspartner Theaitetos die folgende Frage: „Du lernst doch von Theodoros einiges in der Geometrie?" (μανθάνεις που παρὰ Θεοδώρου γεωμετρίας ἄττα;) Der Anonymus kommentiert diese Frage folgendermaßen:

> (i) Er [sc. Sokrates] hat nicht gesagt: „Du lernst von Theodoros Geometrie?", sondern [er verwendet den Ausdruck] „einiges in der Geometrie" (οὐ[κ] εἶπεν „μανθάν[εις] π[αρὰ] Θεοδώρου γεωμετρίαν;" ἀλλ[ὰ] „τινὰ τῆς γεωμετρία[ς]"). Denn der Gegenstand seiner Untersuchung ist nicht das zusammengesetzte Wissen, das einige auch systematisch nennen, sondern das einfache [Wissen] ([ο]ὐ γὰρ περὶ τῆς συν[θ]έτου ἐπιστήμης [ἐ]στὶν αὐτῷ ὁ λόγο[ς,] ἣν καὶ συσ[τ]ηματικ[ή]ν τινες ὀνομάζ[ο]υσιν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῆ[ς ἁ]πλῆς). (ii) Von dieser Art ist auch die Erkenntnis, die sich auf jeden einzelnen Lehrsatz im Bereich der Geometrie oder Musik bezieht (οἷα ἐστὶν καὶ [ἡ] κατὰ ἕκαστον θεώ[ρ]ημα γνῶσις τῶν [κ]ατ[ὰ] γεωμετρίαν καὶ μουσικήν). Und aus diesen einzelnen [Erkenntnissen] bildet sich *ein* zusammengesetztes [Wissen] (ἐκ δὲ τ[ού]των τῶν καθ' ἕκα[στ]ον μία τις ἀποτ[ελ]εῖτ[αι] σύνθετος).
>
> ANON. *In Tht.* 14,45–15,16

28 Vgl. Sedley 1996b: 94.
29 Sedley 1996b: 94.

Schon in der Einleitung des Kommentars hat der Anonymus seinen Leser darüber in Kenntnis gesetzt, dass der Untersuchungsgegenstand des *Theaitetos* das „einfache Wissen“ sei.[30] Was er dort allerdings nicht erwähnt hat, ist, dass es neben diesem „einfachen Wissen“ ein „zusammengesetztes“ bzw. „systematisches Wissen“ gibt (ἐπιστήμη σύνθετος bzw. συστηματική). Was der Anonymus unter der ἐπιστήμη σύνθετος versteht, lässt sich seinen Ausführungen leicht entnehmen: Mit diesem Ausdruck wird eine Einzelwissenschaft bezeichnet wie z.B. die Geometrie oder die Musiktheorie. Aus diesem Grund deutet der Anonymus die Frage des Sokrates in *Tht.* 145c7–8 als einen klaren Hinweis, dass der *Theaitetos* das „einfache Wissen“ untersucht und nicht das „zusammengesetzte“, denn Sokrates fragt seinen jungen Gesprächspartner nicht, ob er *die Geometrie* lerne (also die Wissenschaft), sondern ob er einzelne Gegenstände der Geometrie lerne.[31]

Inwiefern eine Einzelwissenschaft ein „zusammengesetztes Wissen“ ist, wird verständlich, wenn man die Ausführungen des Anonymus in Abschnitt (ii) heranzieht. Hier erläutert der Anonymus nämlich den Begriff des „einfachen Wissens“. Es zeigt sich, dass der Anonymus unter dem „einfachen Wissen“ den Wissensbaustein einer Einzelwissenschaft wie z.B. der Geometrie oder der Musiktheorie versteht,[32] oder wie es der Kommentator ausdrückt, die „Erkenntnis“ (γνῶσις), die sich auf einen einzelnen Lehrsatz einer solchen Wissenschaft bezieht. Dementsprechend ist ein „einfaches Wissen“ der Geometrie z.B. das Wissen, dass die Winkelsumme in jedem Dreieck 180 Grad beträgt, oder das Wissen, dass das Quadrat der Diagonale eines Quadrats doppelt so groß ist wie das Quadrat selbst. Wer über solche Einzelerkenntnisse verfügt, ist noch lange kein Geometer, d.h., er ist nicht im Besitz der ἐπιστήμη σύνθετος „Geometrie“. Als Geometer kann nur derjenige gelten, der über die Kenntnis aller oder zumindest der wichtigsten Theoreme der Geometrie verfügt. Es lässt sich somit nachvollziehen, warum eine Einzelwissenschaft wie die Geometrie als ἐπιστήμη σύνθετος bzw. als ἐπιστήμη συστηματική bezeichnet wird: Die Einzelwissenschaft ist ein „zusammengesetztes“ bzw. „systematisches Wissen“, insofern sie sich aus den einzelnen „einfachen“ ἐπιστῆμαι des jeweiligen wissenschaftlichen Bereichs *zusammensetzt* bzw. ein *System* von solchen einzelnen wissenschaftlichen Erkenntnissen ist.[33]

Nach der Erörterung der Passage 14,45–15,16 lässt sich die oben aufgeworfene Frage beantworten, ob die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ ein Ideen wissen ist. Die

30 Vgl. Anon. *In Tht.* 2,17–21.

31 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 499; Tarrant 2000: 143; Bonazzi 2013: 314.

32 Vgl. Tarrant 1985: 85–86; 2000: 157; 2005: 139.

33 Vgl. Tarrant 1985: 85–86; Meyer 2015: 269.

Ausführungen des Anonymus in dieser Textpassage zeigen, dass diese Frage verneint werden muss: Die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ ist nach Auffassung des Kommentators kein Wissen von den Ideen,[34] sondern eine einzelwissenschaftliche Erkenntnis, die sich stets in einem Theorem, d.h. in einer Proposition, ausdrücken lässt. Allerdings wird sich noch zeigen,[35] dass es eine Beziehung zwischen dem „einfachen Wissen" und den Ideen gibt: Zwar sind die Ideen nicht das Objekt des „einfachen Wissens", aber die Bedingung der Möglichkeit dieses Wissens.[36]

4 Die platonische Definition des „einfachen Wissens": *Menon* 98a als Antwort auf die Wissensfrage des *Theaitetos*

Der Anonymus beantwortet in seinem Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145c7–8 allerdings nicht nur die Frage, worauf sich das „einfache Wissen" bezieht, sondern präsentiert seinem Leser auch die platonische (und somit aus seiner Sicht korrekte) Definition des „einfachen Wissens". So können wir in 15,16–23 Folgendes lesen:

> Daher ist das einfache [Wissen] früher als das zusammengesetzte (ἡ τ[οί]νυν ἁπλῆ προτ[έρα ἐσ]τὶν τῆς συνθέτ[ου]), und dieses [einfache Wissen] hat er [sc. Platon] selbst im *Menon* definiert als „richtige, durch die Ursache der Überlegung angebundene Meinung" ([καὶ] ταύτην αὐτὸ[ς μ]ὲν ὡρίσατο ἐν [τῷ] Μένωνι δόξαν [ὀρ]θὴν δεθ[εῖσ]αν αἰτίᾳ λογισμ[ο]ῦ).[37]

Der Hinweis, das „einfache Wissen" sei „früher"[38] als das „zusammengesetzte Wissen", ist leicht nachvollziehbar, wenn man berücksichtigt, was der Anonymus in 14,45–15,16 ausgeführt hat: Die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ ist „früher" als die ἐπιστήμη

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34 Vgl. Tarrant 2000: 169: „It is clear, then, that TC [der anonyme Kommentator, d.V.] uses this specific kind of knowledge [die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ, d.V.] to explain how the *Theaetetus* can be seriously investigating *epistêmê*. This is the kind of knowledge that (i) has to be investigated in conjunction with criteria of truth, and (ii) does not require Ideas as its object."

35 Vgl. Abschnitt 5 in diesem Aufsatz.

36 Vgl. Tarrant 2000: 170.

37 Im Anschluss (15,23–30) schreibt der Anonymus auch Aristoteles und Zenon (von Kition) eine Definition der ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ zu: Die aristotelische Definition lautet „Annahme mit Beweis" ([ὑ]πόληψιν μετὰ [ἀπ]οδείξεω[ς]); die zenonische Definition bestimmt die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ hingegen als eine „Disposition bei der Aufnahme von Vorstellungen, die durch die Vernunft nicht abänderbar ist" (ἕξι[ν ἐν π]ρο[σ]δέξ[ε]ι φ[αντασι]ῶ[ν] ἀμε[τάπτωτ]ον ὑ[π]ὸ λόγο[υ]). Zu den drei Definitionen der ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ vgl. insb. Tarrant 1984: 98; 2000: 157–159.

38 Die aristotelische Unterscheidung zwischen „früher" (πρότερος) und „später" (ὕστερος) findet sich auch an anderen Stellen im erhaltenen Teil des Kommentars (vgl. 18,25–38; 20,37–42; 40,6–10).

σύνθετος, insofern sie der epistemische Grundbaustein der ἐπιστήμη σύνθετος ist. Das Wissen, das sich z.B. auf einen einzelnen Lehrsatz der Geometrie bezieht, ist selbstverständlich „früher" als die Geometrie, die ein System solcher Einzelerkenntnisse ist.

Weitaus interessanter ist die Behauptung des Anonymus, dass Platon das „einfache Wissen" im *Menon* definiert habe, und zwar als „richtige, durch die Ursache der Überlegung angebundene Meinung" (δόξα ὀρθὴ δεθεῖσα αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ). Die Passage, auf die der Anonymus an dieser Stelle anspielt, ist *Men.* 97e–98a, wo Sokrates seinem Gesprächspartner Menon den Unterschied zwischen Wissen (ἐπιστήμη) und wahrer bzw. richtiger Meinung (ἀληθὴς bzw. ὀρθὴ δόξα) erklärt.[39] Diese Erklärung ist im Dialog erforderlich, weil Sokrates in *Men.* 96d–97c den Nachweis geführt hat, dass die wahre Meinung für die Richtigkeit des Handelns (πρὸς ὀρθότητα πράξεως) keine schlechtere Führerin sei als Wissen und dementsprechend auch nicht weniger nützlich als Wissen. Menon lässt sich überzeugen, legt Sokrates dann aber *zwei Fragen* vor: Wenn richtige Meinung für das Handeln genauso nützlich ist wie Wissen, warum wird dann Wissen im Allgemeinen höher geschätzt als richtige Meinung und worin unterscheiden sich eigentlich Wissen und richtige Meinung?[40] Sokrates beantwortet diese Fragen folgendermaßen:

> Denn auch die wahren Meinungen sind eine schöne Sache und bewirken viel Gutes, solange sie bleiben (καὶ γὰρ αἱ δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς, ὅσον μὲν ἂν χρόνον παραμένωσιν, καλὸν τὸ χρῆμα καὶ πάντ᾽ ἀγαθὰ ἐργάζονται). Lange Zeit aber wollen sie nicht bleiben, sondern fliehen aus der Seele des Menschen (πολὺν δὲ χρόνον οὐκ ἐθέλουσι παραμένειν, ἀλλὰ δραπετεύουσιν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), so dass sie nicht viel wert sind, bis jemand sie anbindet durch die Überlegung der Ursache (ὥστε οὐ πολλοῦ ἄξιαί εἰσιν, ἕως ἄν τις αὐτὰς δήσῃ αἰτίας λογισμῷ). Das aber, mein lieber Menon, ist die Wiedererinnerung, wie wir im vorangegangenen Gespräch übereingekommen sind (τοῦτο δ᾽ ἐστίν, ὦ Μένων ἑταῖρε, ἀνάμνησις, ὡς ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἡμῖν ὡμολόγηται). Wenn sie aber gebunden sind, werden sie zuerst Erkenntnisse, dann bleibend (ἐπειδὰν δὲ δεθῶσιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιστῆμαι γίγνονται, ἔπειτα μόνιμοι). Und eben deshalb ist Wissen wertvoller als richtige Meinung und durch das Gebundensein unterscheidet sich

39 Vgl. Diels – Schubart 1905: XXXIII; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 485; Tarrant 2005: 137; Cover 2015: 139.

40 *Men.* 97c11–d3.

> Wissen von richtiger Meinung (καὶ διὰ ταῦτα δὴ τιμιώτερον ἐπιστήμη ὀρθῆς δόξης ἐστίν, καὶ διαφέρει δεσμῷ ἐπιστήμη ὀρθῆς δόξης).
>
> PLATON, *Men.* 97e6–98a8

Der Unterschied zwischen Wissen und richtiger Meinung besteht nach Sokrates darin, dass Wissen im Gegensatz zur richtigen Meinung fest in der Seele des Wissenden verankert ist. Wissen entsteht nämlich dadurch, dass eine richtige Meinung „angebunden" wird, und zwar durch einen Prozess, den Sokrates als αἰτίας λογισμός („Überlegung der Ursache") bezeichnet. Die Frage nach dem Mehrwert des Wissens lässt sich daher für Sokrates leicht beantworten: Wissen ist wertvoller als richtige Meinung, insofern es aufgrund seiner Stabilität dem Wissenden stets zur Verfügung steht.[41] Leider erklärt der platonische Sokrates nicht, worin der αἰτίας λογισμός, der die Anbindung der richtigen Meinungen bewirkt, genau besteht. Dies ist insofern bedauerlich, als sich die berechtigte Frage stellt, was mit den Begriffen αἰτία bzw. λογισμός gemeint ist.[42] Sokrates weist lediglich darauf hin, dass der Prozess der Anbindung der richtigen Meinungen durch den αἰτίας λογισμός identisch sei mit der zuvor (nämlich in *Men.* 81a–86c) erörterten Anamnesis.

Dass der Anonymus sich berechtigt fühlt, die Ausführungen des platonischen Sokrates in *Men.* 98a als eine Definition der ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ aufzufassen, lässt sich wohl folgendermaßen erklären: In *Men.* 98a5–6 spricht Sokrates davon, dass die richtigen Meinungen durch die Anbindung in ἐπιστῆμαι umgewandelt werden (ἐπειδὰν δὲ δεθῶσιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐπιστῆμαι γίγνονται, ἔπειτα μόνιμοι). Die Verwendung des Plurals ἐπιστῆμαι dürfte für den Anonymus ein klares Indiz sein, dass der Begriff ἐπιστήμη in *Men.* 98a im Sinne der ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ verwendet wird. Aus diesem Grund wird er wohl auch keine Schwierigkeiten gehabt haben, die Wissensdefinition in *Men.* 98a mit der Epistemologie der *Politeia* in Einklang zu bringen: Der Anonymus konnte einfach darauf hinweisen, dass in *Men.* 98a nicht das Ideenwissen der *Politeia* definiert wird, sondern die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ, die kein Wissen von den Ideen ist, sondern eine einzelwissenschaftliche Erkenntnis.

Vergleicht man die Ausführungen des platonischen Sokrates in *Men.* 98a mit der Definition, die der Anonymus (oder seine Quelle) aus dieser Passage entwickelt,[43] so stellt man allerdings eine signifikante Differenz fest: Der

41 Vgl. Grundmann 2008: 87; Hallich 2013: 177–178.

42 Zur Bedeutung des Ausdrucks αἰτίας λογισμῷ vgl. u.a. Bluck 1961: 412–413; Fine 2004: 55–61; Helmig 2012: 54–55; El Murr 2013: 166–171; Hallich 2013: 177–181.

43 Die Wissensdefinition in *Men.* 98a wird nicht nur im anonymen Theaitetoskommentar erwähnt, sondern auch im *Prologos* des Albinos (*Prol.* 6, 150,25–28 Reis), in einem Fragment

Anonymus verwendet in der Definition anstelle des Ausdrucks αἰτίας λογισμῷ („durch die Überlegung der Ursache“) die Wendung αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ („durch die Ursache der Überlegung“).[44] In der Version des Anonymus sind also die Kasus von αἰτία und λογισμός seltsamerweise vertauscht: αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ (Dativ/Genitiv) statt αἰτίας λογισμῷ (Genitiv/Dativ).[45]

Aber nicht nur diese Textvariante wirft Fragen auf. Weitaus drängender ist nämlich das folgende Problem: Wenn Platon das „einfache Wissen“ in *Men.* 98a definiert hat – und davon ist der Anonymus ja überzeugt –, warum stellt der athenische Philosoph dann diese Definition im *Theaitetos* nicht dar, in jenem Dialog also, der nach Auffassung des Anonymus die Frage nach dem Wesen des „einfachen Wissens“ untersucht? Einen Hinweis darauf, wie der Anonymus diese Frage beantwortet, findet man in einer Passage der Einleitung, in welcher der Argumentationsverlauf des *Theaitetos* kurz skizziert wird:[46]

> (i) Da Wissen „richtige, durch die Ursache der Überlegung angebundene Meinung“ ist (ἐπεὶ δ[ὲ ἐπι]στήμη ἦν δόξα ὀρθὴ δεθεῖσα αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ) – wir haben nämlich dann ein Wissen von den Dingen (τότε γὰρ ἴσμεν τὰ πράγματα), wenn wir nicht nur wissen, *dass* sie sind, sondern auch, *warum* [sie sind] (ὅταν μὴ μόνον εἰδῶμεν ὅτι ἔστιν ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τί) – und [weil] diejenigen, welche die Wahrnehmungen überschätzt hatten, weil sie eine gewisse Fähigkeit haben zu „schlagen“ (διὰ τὸ ἔχειν αὐτάς τι πληκτικόν), diesen auch Genauigkeit zuschreiben wollten (ἀνατιθέντες αὐταῖς καὶ τὴν ἀκρίβειαν), (ii) [aus diesem Grund] wird er [sc. Platon] zuerst diese Annahme prüfen (πρῶτον μὲν ταύτην βασανιεῖ τὴν ὑπόληψιν); dann wird er zur richtigen Meinung übergehen (εἶτα μεταβήσεται ἐπὶ δόξαν ὀρθήν), danach zur richtigen Meinung verbunden mit einem *logos* (μετὰ ταύτην ἐπὶ δόξαν ὀρθὴν μετὰ λόγου); und an dieser Stelle wird er die Untersuchung beenden (καὶ ἐνθάδε κατ[α]παύσει τ[ὴ]ν ζήτη[σιν]). Denn wenn er das Band der Ursache hinzufügen würde, dann wäre seine

aus dem Politeiakommentar des Kalbenos Tauros (vgl. Ps.-Heron, *Def.* 137,4) und im zehnten Traktat des Politeiakommentars von Proklos (*In Remp.* 1 262,29–263,3 Kroll). Im Gegensatz zum anonymen Kommentator verwenden die drei Autoren dabei den Ausdruck αἰτίας λογισμῷ, den auch die mittelalterlichen Handschriften BTW für *Men.* 98a3–4 bezeugen. Vgl. hierzu Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 485; Carlini 1995: 1024–1025; Dörrie – Baltes 2002: 126.

44 Vgl. Diels – Schubart 1905: XXXIII; Tarrant 1989: 58; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 485; Tarrant 2000: 148.

45 Zur Variante αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ vgl. insb. Tarrant 1989: 72–74; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 485; Carlini 1995; Martinelli Tempesta 2000: 11–13; Bonazzi 2003b: 44–47.

46 Vgl. Sedley 1996b: 101–102.

> [sc. Platons] Untersuchung über das so beschaffene Wissen[47] vollendet ([εἰ] γ[ὰ]ρ προσλάβοι τ[ὸν] δ[ε]σμὸν τῆς αἰτία[ς, γί]νεται αὐ[τ]ῷ τέλει[ο]ς ὁ τῆ[ς] τοιαύτης ἐπι[σ]τή[μη]ς λόγος).
>
> ANON. *In Tht.* 2,52–3,25

Wie die hier zitierte Passage zeigt, ist der Anonymus davon überzeugt, dass der *Theaitetos* die *Menon*-Definition zwar nicht explizit darstellt, aber auf genau diese Definition zusteuert.[48] Mit jeder geprüften und widerlegten Definition nähert sich der Dialog nämlich dieser Definition an: Zunächst prüft Platon die These, dass die Sinne „Genauigkeit" (ἀκρίβεια) besitzen. Damit ist offensichtlich die in *Tht.* 151e1–3 formulierte Definition gemeint, der zufolge Wissen und Wahrnehmung identisch sind.[49] Nach der Widerlegung dieser Definition bewegt sich der Dialog dann in den Bereich der *richtigen Meinung* (δόξα ὀρθή)[50] und untersucht zunächst die These, dass Wissen richtige Meinung sei (vgl. *Tht.* 187b4–6). Dies ist für den Anonymus zweifelsohne ein großer Fortschritt, weil das „einfache Wissen" seiner Meinung nach eine *Art der richtigen Meinung* ist. Allerdings muss diese Definition widerlegt werden, weil das „einfache Wissen" *nicht identisch* ist mit der richtigen Meinung, sondern vielmehr als „richtige Meinung + x" bestimmt werden muss. Der Anonymus kann daher nicht umhin, auch die nächste Definition als einen Fortschritt zu betrachten, denn sie bestimmt Wissen als „richtige Meinung verbunden mit einem *logos*" (vgl. *Tht.* 201c8–d3) und hat somit (nach Auffassung des Kommentators) die logisch korrekte Struktur, nämlich „richtige Meinung + x". Allerdings muss auch diese Definition widerlegt werden, weil das x *nicht richtig bestimmt ist*. Mit der Zurückweisung dieser Definition endet bekanntlich der *Theaitetos*. Im Gegensatz zu den meisten modernen Interpreten bedeutet dies für den Anonymus aber keineswegs, dass der Dialog aporetisch endet. Im Gegenteil: Die Untersuchung steht nach Auffassung des Kommentators unmittelbar vor der Vollendung. Man muss zum Ausdruck „richtige Meinung" nur noch das „Band der Ursache" (τ[ὸν] δ[ε]σμὸν τῆς αἰτία[ς]) hinzufügen, dann ergibt sich die korrekte

47 Gemeint ist die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ. Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 486.

48 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 484.

49 Vgl. Opsomer 1998: 41.

50 Der Anonymus, der wie Platon nicht zwischen „wahrer" und „richtiger" Meinung differenziert, ersetzt in der zweiten und dritten Definition des *Theaitetos* den Ausdruck „wahr" durch „richtig", um so deutlich zu machen, dass sich der *Theaitetos* schrittweise auf die Wissensdefinition des *Menon* zubewegt. Die Variante „richtige Meinung verbunden mit einem *logos*" (statt „wahre Meinung verbunden mit einem *logos*") verwendet auch Platon in *Tht.* 208b8 und 208c3 (vgl. hierzu auch Dixsaut 2013: 145).

Definition des „einfachen Wissens“, nämlich „richtige, durch die Ursache der Überlegung angebundene Meinung“ (δόξα ὀρθὴ δεθεῖσα αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ).[51]

Warum aber stellt Platon diese Definition im *Theaitetos* nicht explizit dar? Warum beendet er die Untersuchung des „einfachen Wissens“ genau an dem Punkt, wo nur noch ein einziger Schritt fehlt, um die Untersuchung zu vollenden? Der Anonymus beantwortet diese Frage in der Passage 2,52–3,25 nicht explizit,[52] weshalb man nur darüber spekulieren kann, wie er die Zurückhaltung Platons erklärt hat. Einen überzeugenden Lösungsvorschlag macht David Sedley in seinem oben schon erwähnten Aufsatz „Three Platonist Interpretations of the *Theaetetus*“: Nach Sedley ist der Anonymus der Überzeugung, dass nicht nur Sokrates auf der dramatischen Ebene des *Theaitetos* die maieutische Methode praktiziert, sondern auch Platon, der Verfasser des Dialogs, und zwar gegenüber dem Leser des *Theaitetos*.[53] Wenn man dies annimmt, d.h., dass Platon die geistige Hebamme des Lesers ist, dann wäre das Schweigen Platons am Ende des *Theaitetos* konsequent, denn wie der Anonymus in seiner Auslegung der Maieutik-Passage deutlich macht, ist es nicht die Aufgabe des maieutischen Lehrers, die aus seiner Sicht richtigen Antworten in die Seele des Schülers „einzufügen“, sondern ihm dazu zu verhelfen, diese Antworten selbst zu entwickeln, weil er nämlich voraussetzen kann, dass jede menschliche Seele (in ihrer körperlosen Präexistenz) die Wahrheit geschaut hat.[54]

Die Ausführungen in 2,52–3,25 sind aber noch aus einem weiteren Grund aufschlussreich. Es zeigt sich nämlich, dass der Anonymus auch an dieser Stelle (wie in 15,16–23) in der aus *Men.* 98a entwickelten Definition den Ausdruck αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ („durch die Ursache der Überlegung“) anstelle des Ausdrucks αἰτίας λογισμῷ („durch die Überlegung der Ursache“) verwendet. Allerdings scheint diese Variante keinen Einfluss darauf zu haben, wie er die Definition interpretiert. Dies zeigt die kurze Erläuterung der Definition in Abschnitt (i) des oben zitierten Texts, der zufolge wir genau dann ein Wissen von den Dingen haben, „wenn wir nicht nur wissen, *dass* sie sind (ὅταν μὴ μόνον εἰδῶμεν ὅτι ἔστιν), sondern auch, *warum* [sie sind] (ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τί).“ Gemäß dieser Erläuterung bewirkt die Kenntnis des „Warum“, also der αἰτία, die Anbindung der richtigen Meinung. Es wird somit deutlich, dass der Kommentator die Definition so deutet, als hätte er nicht die Lesart αἰτίᾳ λογισμοῦ, sondern αἰτίας

51 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 484.
52 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 484.
53 Sedley 1996b: 102–103; vgl. auch Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 484–485; Sedley 2004: 5; Bonazzi 2013: 314–315; El Murr 2013: 154–155.
54 Vgl. Anon. *In Tht.* 47,31–48,7; s. hierzu auch Abschnitt 5 in diesem Aufsatz.

λογισμῷ vor sich.[55] Zudem kann man der Passage entnehmen, was der Anonymus genau unter der αἰτία versteht, deren Kenntnis die Anbindung der richtigen Meinung bewirkt: Es ist kein beliebiger *Rechtfertigungsgrund*, sondern ein *Realgrund*, eine *Ursache*. Die richtige Meinung, dass p, wird also nicht dadurch angebunden, dass man durch beliebige Gründe rechtfertigen kann, warum die Meinung richtig ist, sondern wenn man angeben kann, *warum* der Sachverhalt p besteht, d.h., wenn man die *Ursache von p* kennt.[56] In der Forschungsliteratur wird daher zu Recht darauf hingewiesen, dass der Anonymus in seiner Deutung der Wissensdefinition in *Men*. 98a auch durch die aristotelische Wissenschaftstheorie beeinflusst ist:[57] In den *Analytica posteriora* differenziert Aristoteles nämlich nicht nur zwischen dem „Wissen des Dass" und dem „Wissen des Warum",[58] sondern formuliert auch den Gedanken, dass Ursachenkenntnis eine unabdingbare Voraussetzung für Wissen im eigentlichen Sinn sei.[59]

5 Der Erwerb des „einfachen Wissens": Zur Funktion der Anamnesislehre in der Epistemologie des anonymen Kommentators

Anhand der bisher untersuchten Passagen aus dem anonymen Theaitetoskommentar konnte gezeigt werden, was der Anonymus unter dem „einfachen Wissen" versteht und wie aus seiner Sicht die platonische Definition des „einfachen Wissens" lautet. Es bleibt nun noch eine letzte Frage zu untersuchen, nämlich diejenige, wie das „einfache Wissen" nach Auffassung des Kommentators *erworben wird*. Im Folgenden soll gezeigt werden, dass sich diese Frage mit Hilfe des Kommentars zu *Tht*. 145d7–e6 beantworten lässt. In *Tht*. 145d7–e6 findet sich der folgende Wortwechsel zwischen Sokrates und Theaitetos:

> So.: Besteht das Lernen etwa nicht darin, dass man weiser wird im Hinblick darauf, was man lernt? (ἆρ' οὐ τὸ μανθάνειν ἐστὶν τὸ σοφώτερον γίγνεσθαι περὶ ὃ μανθάνει τις;) – Tht.: Allerdings. – So.: Durch die Weisheit

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55 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 485; Carlini 1995: 1023; Opsomer 1998: 40–41; Martinelli Tempesta 2000: 12; Tarrant 2000: 148; Bonazzi 2003b: 46.

56 Vgl. Tarrant 1985: 86; Opsomer 1998: 41; Tarrant 2000: 148. Zur Unterscheidung zwischen Erkenntnis- und Realgründen vgl. Graeser 1993: 268; Patzig 1996: 125–126.

57 Vgl. Moraux 1984: 490–491; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 485–486; Bonazzi 2013: 321–322.

58 Vgl. u.a. *An. post*. 1.13, 78a28–34.

59 Dies zeigt u.a. die Bestimmung des Wissens, die Aristoteles im zweiten Kapitel des ersten Buchs der *Analytica posteriora* formuliert: ἐπίστασθαι δὲ οἰόμεθ' ἕκαστον ἁπλῶς, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὸν

aber, meine ich, [sind] die Weisen weise (σοφίᾳ δέ γ' οἶμαι σοφοὶ οἱ σοφοί). – Tht.: Ja – So.: Dies aber ist doch nicht etwa in irgendeiner Beziehung vom Wissen verschieden? (τοῦτο δὲ μῶν διαφέρει τι ἐπιστήμης;) – Tht.: Was denn? – So.: Die Weisheit. Oder [ist man] etwa nicht darin auch weise, worin [man] wissend [ist]? (ἡ σοφία. ἢ οὐχ ἅπερ ἐπιστήμονες ταῦτα καὶ σοφοί;) – Tht.: Ganz gewiss. – So.: Wissen und Weisheit [sind] also dasselbe? (ταὐτὸν ἄρα ἐπιστήμη καὶ σοφία;)

Sokrates geht es an dieser Stelle lediglich darum, vom Thema des Lernens zum eigentlichen Thema, nämlich der Frage „Was ist Wissen?“, überzuleiten[60] und dabei dem Mathematikstudenten Theaitetos zugleich aufzuzeigen, welchen Zusammenhang es zwischen Lernen (τὸ μανθάνειν) und Wissen (ἐπιστήμη) gibt. Der Gedankengang des Sokrates gliedert sich in *vier Schritte*:

(1) Lernen besteht darin, dass man weiser wird im Hinblick darauf, was man lernt.
(2) Durch die Weisheit sind die Weisen weise.
(3) Worin man „wissend“ (ἐπιστήμων) ist, darin ist man auch „weise“ (σοφός).
(4) Daraus folgt, dass Wissen (ἐπιστήμη) und Weisheit (σοφία) dasselbe sind.[61]

Der Anonymus gibt sich in seinem Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145d7–e6 (16,14–17,32) mit einer solchen Deutung allerdings nicht zufrieden: Er ist nämlich davon überzeugt, dass Platon an dieser Stelle ein *verborgenes Argument* für die Kernthese der Anamnesislehre formuliert.[62] Zu dieser Auffassung gelangt er dadurch, dass er die einzelnen Schritte des Gedankengangs in *Tht.* 145d7–e6 nur als Prämissen eines weitaus komplexeren Arguments auffasst, dessen Konklusion der Leser des Dialogs selbst entwickeln muss. Die Argumentation, die der Anonymus in Platons Text angelegt sieht, besteht aus insgesamt *sechs Schritten*:[63]

(1) Derjenige, der lernt, wird weiser (ὁ μανθάνων σοφώτερος γίνεται). [*minor*]
(2) Derjenige, der weiser wird, erlangt [seine] Weisheit wieder (ὁ σοφώτερος γινόμενος σοφίαν ἀναλαμβάνει). [*maior*]

σοφιστικὸν τρόπον τὸν κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὅταν τήν τ' αἰτίαν οἰώμεθα γινώσκειν δι' ἣν τὸ πρᾶγμά ἐστιν, ὅτι ἐκείνου αἰτία ἐστί, καὶ μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι τοῦτ' ἄλλως ἔχειν (*An. post.* 1.2, 71b9–12). Vgl. hierzu Detel 1993: 53–54; Graeser 1993: 267–268.

60 Vgl. Praechter 1909: 541; Sedley 1993: 127.

61 Vgl. Sedley 1993: 128; Bonazzi 2013: 318.

62 Vgl. Sedley 1993: 128; Tarrant 2005: 140.

63 Vgl. Sedley 1993: 128–129; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 501–502; Bonazzi 2013: 319.

(3) Derjenige, der lernt, erlangt also [seine] Weisheit wieder (ὁ ἄρα μανθάνων σοφίαν ἀναλαμβάνει). [*conclusio*]
(4) Worin man wissend ist, darin ist man auch weise.
(5) Daraus folgt: Wissen (ἐπιστήμη) und Weisheit (σοφία) sind dasselbe.
(6) [Gesamtkonklusion:] Derjenige, der lernt, erlangt also [sein] Wissen wieder (ὁ ἄρα μανθάνων ἐπιστήμην ἀναλαμβάνει).[64]

Die Wendung ἐπιστήμην ἀναλαμβάνειν, die sich in der Gesamtkonklusion des Arguments findet, ist dem Leser des *Menon* und *Phaidon* wohlbekannt: Platon zieht sie in beiden Dialogen heran, um die Wiedererinnerung als Wiedererlangung eines vorgeburtlichen Wissens zu charakterisieren.[65] Die Gesamtkonklusion des Arguments bringt also den Grundgedanken der Anamnesislehre zum Ausdruck, dass Lernen nichts anderes sei als Wiedererinnerung an ein vorgeburtliches Wissen.[66] Für die Untersuchung der Frage, wie das „einfache Wissen" erworben wird, ist von entscheidender Bedeutung, wie der Anonymus den Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145d7–e6 beschließt. In 17,25–32 führt er nämlich Folgendes aus:

> Beiläufig hat er [sc. Platon] an dieser Stelle [sc. in *Tht.* 145d7–e6] zudem gezeigt, dass der Gegenstand seiner Untersuchung das einfache Wissen ist (παρ[ι]ὼν ἐνθάδε παρεδή[λωσ]εν ὅτι περὶ τῆ[ς ἁπλῆ]ς ἐπιστήμη[ς ἐστὶν αὐτ]ῷ ὁ λόγος), indem er den Worten „dass man weiser wird" die Worte „im Hinblick darauf, was man lernt" hinzufügt ([προσθεὶς τ]ῷ „σοφώτ[ερον γίγνε]σθαι" τὸ „πε[ρὶ ὃ μαν]θάνει τις").

Schon im Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145c7–8 (wo Sokrates fragt: „Du lernst doch von Theodoros einiges in der Geometrie?") hat der Anonymus das Erlernen einzelner Wissensgegenstände als klares Indiz dafür gedeutet, dass Platon im *Theaitetos* das „einfache Wissen" erörtert (und nicht das „zusammengesetzte"). Allerdings geht die hier zitierte Passage in einem wesentlichen Punkt über den Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145c7–8 hinaus. Man kann nämlich den Ausführungen

64 Anon. *In Tht.* 16,14–17,3. Der Anonymus formuliert zwei Versionen des Arguments: Die erste (16,14–25) lässt einige Zwischenprämissen aus, in der zweiten (16,32–17,3) fehlt die Gesamtkonklusion. In der Übersicht werden beide Versionen so miteinander kombiniert, dass alle Schritte expliziert sind. Vgl. hierzu Sedley 1993: 127–129; Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 500–502; Bonazzi 2013: 319.

65 Vgl. u.a. *Men.* 85d3–10; *Phd.* 75e2–7; s. hierzu auch Sedley 1993: 128; Tarrant 2005: 140; Bonazzi 2013: 318–319.

66 Vgl. Tarrant 2005: 140; Bonazzi 2013: 319.

des Anonymus entnehmen, wie er die Frage nach dem Erwerb des „einfachen Wissens“ beantwortet: Wenn nämlich (a) in der Passage *Tht.* 145d7–e6 das „einfache Wissen“ erörtert wird und (b) in ebendieser Passage zudem ein Argument für die These formuliert wird, wonach Lernen darin besteht, dass man ein Wissen wiedererlangt, dann darf man den folgenden Schluss ziehen: Das „einfache Wissen“ wird nicht dadurch erworben, dass ein Lehrer (wie Theodoros im Falle des Theaitetos) das Wissen in die Seele des Lernenden „einfügt“, sondern dadurch, dass der Lernende das Wissen „wiedererlangt“, sich also wiedererinnert.[67]

Wie Harold Tarrant in seiner Studie *Recollecting Plato's* Meno zu Recht feststellt, ist es keineswegs überraschend, dass der Anonymus die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ als ein Wissen auffasst, das durch Wiedererinnerung erworben wird: So wird die Anamnesis im berühmten Sklavengespräch des *Menon* (82b–85b) bekanntlich mit Hilfe eines geometrischen Problems („Wie verdoppelt man ein gegebenes Quadrat?“) veranschaulicht.[68] Der Anonymus dürfte den im Sklavengespräch dargestellten Wissenserwerb als ein Beispiel *par excellence* für den Erwerb des „einfachen Wissens“ aufgefasst haben, denn wie wir bereits gesehen haben, versteht der Anonymus unter der ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ eine einzelwissenschaftliche Erkenntnis, deren Inhalt ein einzelner Lehrsatz ist. Es gibt aber noch eine weitere Passage im *Menon*, aus welcher der Anonymus erschließen konnte, dass die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ durch Wiedererinnerung erworben wird, nämlich die uns wohlbekannte Passage *Men.* 98a. So wird der Prozess der Anbindung der richtigen Meinungen in *Men.* 98a4–5 expressis verbis mit der Wiedererinnerung identifiziert. Für den Kommentator konnte also kein Zweifel bestehen, dass das „einfache Wissen“ durch Wiedererinnerung erworben wird, denn er ist ja davon überzeugt, dass in *Men.* 98a das „einfache Wissen“ definiert wird.[69]

Leider findet sich im erhaltenen Teil des Kommentars keine systematische Darstellung der platonischen Anamnesislehre. Es gibt aber eine Reihe von Stellen, an denen sich der Anonymus etwas genauer zur Wiedererinnerung äußert als im Kommentar zu *Tht.* 145d7–e6. Dies lässt sich leicht dadurch erklären, dass der Anonymus als unitarischer Leser der platonischen Dialoge die sokratische Maieutik des *Theaitetos* im Lichte der Anamnesislehre des *Menon*, *Phaidon* und *Phaidros* deutet.[70] Die wichtigste Bemerkung zur Verknüpfung

67 Vgl. Tarrant 2000: 149; 2005: 139–140.

68 Tarrant 2005: 140.

69 Vgl. Tarrant 2000: 149; 2005: 140.

70 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 250 u. 536; Bonazzi 2003a: 184–185; Helmig 2012: 283–284. Die Verknüpfung von Maieutik und Anamnesis findet sich auch in Plutarchs erster *Quaestio*

der Maieutik mit der Anamnesislehre findet sich im Kommentar zu *Tht.* 149a4, wo Sokrates seinem Gesprächspartner Theaitetos die folgende Frage stellt: „Hast du auch gehört, dass ich dieselbe Kunst[71] ausübe?" (ἆρα καὶ ὅτι ἐπιτηδεύω τὴν αὐτὴν τέχνην ἀκήκοας;) Diese Frage des platonischen Sokrates kommentiert der Anonymus folgendermaßen:

> (i) Nach ihr [sc. seiner Mutter] nannte er [sc. Sokrates] sich einen Geburtshelfer, da sein Unterricht von dieser Art war ([ἐξ ἐκείν]ης ἔλεγεν ἑα[υτὸ]ν μαιευτικόν, ὅ[τι ἡ] διδασκα[λ]ία αὐτ[οῦ τ]οιαύτη{ς} ἦν). Denn sonst pflegte er seine Meinung auszusprechen und hatte Lehrmeinungen ([ἄλλ]ως μ[ὲ]ν γὰρ ἀπε[φαίν]ετο [κ]αὶ εἶχεν [δόγ]ματα); wenn er aber unterrichtete, veranlasste er seine Schüler, selbst über die Dinge zu sprechen (ἐν δὲ τῷ [διδά]σκειν αὐτοὺς [παρ]εσκεύαζεν [τοὺς] μανθάνοντας [λέγει]ν περὶ τῶν π[ραγ]μάτων), und dabei entfaltete und gliederte er ihre natürlichen Begriffe (ἀναπτύ[σ]σων αὐτῶν τὰς φυσικὰς ἐννοίας καὶ διαρθρῶν). (ii) Und dies entspricht der Lehre, dass das sogenannte Lernen Wiedererinnerung sei (καὶ τοῦτο ἀκόλο[υ]θον τῷ δόγματι τῷ τὰς λεγομένας μαθήσεις ἀναμνήσεις ε[ἶ]να[ι]) und jede Seele eines Menschen das Seiende geschaut habe (κ[αὶ] πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴν τεθεᾶσθαι τὰ ὄντα) und nicht der Einfügung von Lerngegenständen bedürfe, sondern der Wiedererinnerung (καὶ δεῖν αὐτῇ οὐκ ἐνθέσεως μαθημάτων ἀλλὰ ἀναμνήσεως).
>
> ANON. *In Tht.* 47,31–48,7

In Abschnitt (i) des hier zitierten Texts beschreibt der Anonymus zunächst, worin die maieutische Tätigkeit des Sokrates genau besteht: Wenn Sokrates Geburtshilfe leistet, dann hält er seine eigenen Überzeugungen bzw. Lehrmeinungen zurück und fordert stattdessen seine Schüler auf, über „die Dinge" zu sprechen, womit gemeint sein dürfte, dass er sie auffordert, *Definitionen zu formulieren*. Dabei „entfaltet" und „gliedert" er die sog. „natürlichen Begriffe" (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι) in der Seele der jungen Leute und hilft ihnen so dabei, sich wiederzuerinnern.[72] Diese maieutische Tätigkeit des Sokrates bezeichnet der Anonymus ausdrücklich als „Unterricht" (διδασκαλία), weil er (wie der

Platonica (*Quaest. Plat.* 1000D–E), im *Prologos* des Albinos (*Prol.* 6, 150,33–35 Reis) und in der zehnten *Oratio* des Maximos von Tyros (*Or.* 10,4). Vgl. hierzu insb. Opsomer 1998: 208–212.

71 Gemeint ist die Hebammenkunst.

72 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 535; Opsomer 1998: 49; Helmig 2012: 283–284. Dass der maieutische Lehrer die „Entfaltung" und „Gliederung" der Begriffe dadurch bewirkt, dass er

platonische Sokrates in *Men.* 87b8–c1) die Ausdrücke „lehrbar" (διδακτόν) und „wiedererinnerbar" (ἀναμνηστόν) für austauschbar hält.[73] Wer jungen Leuten dabei hilft, sich wiederzuerinnern, darf deshalb im eigentlichen Sinne als „Lehrer" gelten.[74]

Besondere Aufmerksamkeit verdienen die in diesem Zusammenhang erwähnten „natürlichen Begriffe" (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι), die im erhaltenen Teil des Kommentars mehrfach thematisiert werden. Der Anonymus bezeichnet sie dabei auch als „allgemeine Begriffe" (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι) oder schlicht als „Begriffe" (ἔννοιαι), ohne dass damit ein Bedeutungsunterschied angezeigt wird.[75] Zwar findet sich der Begriff ἔννοια schon bei Platon,[76] doch dieser Umstand darf nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass die Ausdrücke φυσικαὶ bzw. κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι ursprünglich Termini technici der stoischen Epistemologie sind:[77] Mit dem Terminus „Begriffe" (ἔννοιαι) bezeichnen die Stoiker generische Vorstellungen wie z.B. „Mensch", „Pferd", „weiß" etc.,[78] die nach stoischer Lehre nicht angeboren sind, sondern erst nach der Geburt entstehen. Dabei unterscheiden die Stoiker mehrere Arten der Begriffsbildung: Zum Beispiel können sich Begriffe durch die Sinneswahrnehmung bilden (genauer: durch wiederholte Sinneswahrnehmung und die dabei stattfindende Anhäufung gleichartiger Erinnerungen),[79] aber auch durch Denkoperationen wie z.B. „Analogie" (ἀναλογία) und „Zusammensetzung" (σύνθεσις).[80] Sind solche Begriffe *allen Menschen* (*qua Vernunftwesen*) *gemeinsam*, sprechen die Stoiker von „allgemeinen Begriffen" (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι)[81] oder auch, insofern sich die Begriffe „auf natürliche Weise" (φυσικῶς)

seine Schüler Definitionen formulieren lässt und diese dann prüft, kann man einer früheren Passage im Kommentar entnehmen, in der sich der Anonymus zum Zweck der Definitionen äußert: In 23,1–12 betont der Kommentator nämlich, dass der Hauptzweck der Definitionen (ὅροι) darin bestehe, die „allgemeinen Begriffe" zu „entfalten" (πρὸς τ[ὸ ἀ]ναπλῶσαι τὰς κο[ιν]ὰς ἐννοίας). Vgl. hierzu Tarrant 1985: 84; 2005: 141; Bonazzi 2013: 320–321.

73 Anon. *In Tht.* 56,26–31.

74 Vgl. Opsomer 1998: 49; Tarrant 2000: 149.

75 Vgl. Anon. *In Tht.* 23,7–8 (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι); 46,43–44 (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι); 47,20–21 (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι); 47,44–45 (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι); 53,45–46 (ἔννοιαι); 55,31 (ἔννοιαι); 56,34 (ἔννοιαι); s. hierzu auch Opsomer 1998: 50.

76 Vgl. u.a. *Phd.* 73c9; *Resp.* 7. 524e5; *Tim.* 47a6.

77 Vgl. Whittaker – Louis 1990: 84; Chiaradonna 2007: 209–210; Bonazzi 2013: 315–316.

78 Vgl. Long – Sedley 2000: 286 (§ 39).

79 Vgl. Aëtios 4,11,1–4 (*SVF* 2,83); s. hierzu Pohlenz 1940: 82–85; Long – Sedley 2000: 286 (§ 39); Brittain 2005: 168–174; Fine 2014: 258–260.

80 Vgl. Diogenes Laertios 7,52–53 (*SVF* 2,87); s. hierzu Pohlenz 1940: 82–85; Hossenfelder 1995: 71.

81 Vgl. Frede 1999: 320; Brittain 2005: 177; Chiaradonna 2007: 210.

bilden, von „natürlichen Begriffen" (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι).[82] Aber nicht nur die Termini φυσικαὶ bzw. κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι sind stoischen Ursprungs, sondern auch der Gedanke, dass solche Begriffe mit Hilfe von Definitionen „gegliedert" bzw. „entfaltet" werden müssen, damit man den Begriffsinhalt in vollem Umfang erfassen kann.[83]

Diels/Schubart (1905: XXXI) sprechen angesichts der Tatsache, dass sich im Kommentar der Ausdruck φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι findet, von einer „naive[n] Verwendung stoischer Termini". Allerdings hat der Begriff der φυσικὴ ἔννοια, so wie ihn der Anonymus und andere Mittelplatoniker (z.B. Alkinoos und Albinos[84]) verwenden, recht wenig mit der stoischen Epistemologie zu tun.[85] Dies zeigt sich, wenn man Abschnitt (ii) des oben zitierten Texts heranzieht, in dem der Anonymus das *epistemologische und ontologische Fundament* der Anamnesislehre anspricht. Wie man dieser Passage klar entnehmen kann, ist in der Epistemologie des Anonymus (bzw. in seiner Interpretation der platonischen Epistemologie) die Lehre von der Wiedererinnerung untrennbar mit der Ideenlehre verknüpft (entsprechend der Darstellung der Anamnesislehre im *Phaidon* und *Phaidros*). Wenn der Anonymus nämlich in 48,1–4 behauptet, dass nach der Anamnesislehre „jede Seele eines Menschen das Seiende geschaut habe" (κ[αὶ] πᾶσαν ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴν τεθεᾶσθαι τὰ ὄντα), dann spielt er zweifelsohne auf eine Passage in der „Palinodie" des *Phaidros* an, in der Sokrates Folgendes ausführt:[86]

> Denn, wie gesagt (καθάπερ γὰρ εἴρηται), jede Seele eines Menschen hat zwar von Natur das Seiende geschaut (πᾶσα μὲν ἀνθρώπου ψυχὴ φύσει τεθέαται τὰ ὄντα), andernfalls wäre sie nicht in das menschliche Lebewesen eingetreten; doch sich erinnern zu lassen von den Dingen hier unten an jene anderen, das fällt nicht jeder Seele leicht [...].
>
> PLATON, *Phdr*. 249e4–250a2; Übers. Heitsch 1993

Mit dem Ausdruck τὰ ὄντα bezeichnet der platonische Sokrates an dieser Stelle wie auch sonst in der „Palinodie" *die Ideen*.[87] Man darf also annehmen, dass

82 Vgl. Frede 1999: 319–320.

83 Vgl. Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 4,53; Plutarch, *De comm. not.* 1059B–C (*SVF* 2,33); Epiktet, *Diss.* 2,17,1–18; Augustinus, *De civ. Dei* 8,7 (*SVF* 2,106). Zur stoischen Lehre von der Begriffsgliederung vgl. u.a. Pohlenz 1940: 84–85; Helmig 2012: 279–281.

84 Vgl. u.a. Alkinoos, *Did.* 4, 155,20–36 Whittaker – Louis; Albinos, *Prol.* 6, 150,21–23 Reis; s. hierzu Dillon 1993: 67–68.

85 Zur Verwendung des Begriffs φυσικὴ ἔννοια im Mittelplatonismus vgl. u.a. Opsomer 1998: 206–212; Dörrie – Baltes 2002: 129–131.

86 Vgl. Bastianini – Sedley 1995: 536; Sedley 1996b: 100 Anm. 46.

87 Vgl. u.a. *Phdr*. 247e3; 248a5.

der Anonymus unter der in 48,1–4 erwähnten Schau des Seienden dasselbe versteht wie der platonische Sokrates in der „Palinodie“: nämlich die *vorgeburtliche Ideenschau*, welche die Grundlage für die Wiedererinnerung nach der Geburt ist.

Es zeigt sich also, dass der Anonymus unter den „natürlichen Begriffen“ (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι) etwas völlig anderes versteht als die Stoiker: Die „natürlichen Begriffe“ entstehen nicht *nach der Geburt* durch wiederholte Sinneswahrnehmung, sondern vielmehr *vor der Geburt*, wenn die Seele die Ideen schaut. Das heißt: Der „natürliche Begriff“ des Guten oder des Schönen entsteht dadurch, dass die Seele die Idee des Guten bzw. die Idee des Schönen betrachtet und sich so in der Seele eine Erinnerung an die geschaute Idee bildet, die auch nach der Inkorporation in der Seele erhalten bleibt.[88] Aus diesem Grund kann der Anonymus in 47,45–48,7 behaupten, dass die maieutische „Entfaltung“ und „Gliederung“ der φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι *der platonischen Anamnesis- und Ideenlehre gemäß* (*ἀκόλουθον*) *sei.*

Es stellt sich nun allerdings die Frage, welche Beziehung zwischen der maieutischen Begriffsgliederung und dem Erwerb des „einfachen Wissens“ besteht. Diese Frage lässt sich spekulativ beantworten, wenn man die bisherigen Untersuchungsergebnisse heranzieht: Oben wurde deutlich, dass die Anamnesis für den Anonymus ein Prozess ist, bei dem der Lernende bzw. seine Seele ein „einfaches Wissen“ wiedererlangt.[89] Dieser Prozess ist wiederum damit gleichbedeutend, dass eine richtige Meinung angebunden wird, und zwar durch die *Kenntnis der Ursache*. Denn wir erinnern uns: Nach Meinung des Kommentators läuft die Wissensdefinition in *Men.* 98a darauf hinaus, dass wir genau dann ein „einfaches Wissen“ haben, wenn wir nicht nur wissen, *dass* p, sondern auch, *warum* p.[90] Die Gliederung der „natürlichen Begriffe“ könnte nun erklären, wie derjenige, der eine richtige Meinung hat, die Ursachenkenntnis erlangt, die ihn dazu befähigt, diese Meinung anzubinden: Zwar werden die „natürlichen Begriffe“ an keiner Stelle im erhaltenen Teil des Kommentars direkt mit Ursachen oder einer Ursachenkenntnis in Verbindung gebracht. Aber es gibt gute Gründe, mit Harold Tarrant anzunehmen, dass der Anonymus

88 Vgl. Tarrant 2005: 143; Helmig 2012: 283; Bonazzi 2013: 319. Ein solches Verständnis der „natürlichen Begriffe“ findet sich auch im *Didaskalikos*: In *Did.* 4, 155,20–34 Whittaker – Louis unterscheidet Alkinoos zwischen der Ideenschau der (körperlosen) Seele, die im eigentlichen Sinne „Erkenntnis“ (νόησις) genannt werde, und der φυσικὴ ἔννοια, die eine in der inkorporierten Seele ruhende „Erkenntnis“ sei (νόησίς τις οὖσα ἐναποκειμένη τῇ ψυχῇ), also eine Erinnerung an eine bestimmte Idee. Vgl. hierzu Dillon 1993: 67–68; Sedley 1996a: 305; Chiaradonna 2007: 210–215.

89 Vgl. Anon. *In Tht.* 16,14–17,32.

90 Vgl. Anon. *In Tht.* 2,52–3,7.

den „natürlichen Begriffen“ das Potential zuschreibt, der inkorporierten Seele einen Einblick in die wahren Ursachen der Dinge zu gewähren.[91] Dies lässt sich folgendermaßen begründen: Wie wir schon gesehen haben, sind die „natürlichen Begriffe“ für den Anonymus nichts anderes als Erinnerungen an die Ideen, die in der inkorporierten Seele gewissermaßen „gespeichert“ sind. Die Ideen werden nun bekanntlich im *Phaidon* (genauer: in der Passage *Phd.* 100b–102a) als die wahren Ursachen der Dinge dargestellt (z.B. ist die Idee des Schönen die Ursache dafür, dass alle sinnlichen Dinge schön sind, die Idee des Großen dafür, dass die Dinge groß sind). Wenn die φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι „entfaltet“ und „gegliedert“ sind, dann könnten sie dem Menschen also eine Kenntnis vermitteln, *warum die Dinge so sind, wie sie sind*, und diese Ursachenkenntnis könnte den Menschen in die Lage versetzen, die richtige Meinung anzubinden und so in ein „einfaches Wissen“ umzuwandeln.[92]

6 Schluss

Abschließend sollen die Ergebnisse der vorangehenden Untersuchung kurz zusammengefasst werden: Es hat sich gezeigt, dass der anonyme Kommentator den *Theaitetos* als eine Untersuchung des „einfachen Wissens“ (ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ) auffasst. Dabei versteht er unter dem „einfachen Wissen“ nicht etwa ein Ideenwissen, sondern vielmehr eine einzelwissenschaftliche Erkenntnis. Die platonische Definition der ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ („richtige, durch die Ursache der Überlegung angebundene Meinung“) findet der Anonymus nicht im *Theaitetos*, sondern im *Menon*, und zwar in der Passage *Men.* 98a. Dies bedeutet aber keineswegs, dass der Kommentator den *Theaitetos* als einen aporetischen Dialog liest. Er ist nämlich davon überzeugt, dass Platon im *Theaitetos* auf diese Definition zusteuert und sie nur aus pädagogischen Gründen nicht explizit darstellt. Die Wissensdefinition in *Men.* 98a erläutert der Anonymus dahingehend, dass wir genau dann ein Wissen von einem Sachverhalt p haben, wenn wir nicht nur wissen, dass p, sondern auch, warum p, d.h., wenn wir die Ursache von p kennen. Wie der platonische Sokrates in *Men.* 98a identifiziert der Anonymus den Prozess der Anbindung der richtigen Meinungen mit der Wiedererinnerung. Dementsprechend ist er davon überzeugt, dass die ἐπιστήμη ἁπλῆ ein Wissen ist, das nicht von außen in die Seele des Lernenden „eingefügt“, sondern durch die Anamnesis „wiederlangt“ wird. Die notwendige Voraussetzung für die Anamnesis (und somit für die Wiedererlangung des

91 Tarrant 1985: 85; 2005: 143.
92 Vgl. Tarrant 1985: 85; 2005: 143.

„einfachen Wissens“) sind die „natürlichen Begriffe“ (φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι), die der Anonymus (wie im Mittelplatonismus üblich) als Erinnerungen an die vorgeburtliche Ideenschau auffasst. Allerdings müssen diese „Begriffe“ nach Auffassung des Kommentators „entfaltet“ und „gegliedert“ werden, damit die Wiedererlangung des „einfachen Wissens“ stattfinden kann. In seinen exegetischen Bemerkungen zur Maieutik-Passage des *Theaitetos* betont der Anonymus, dass der maieutische Lehrer diese „Entfaltung“ und „Gliederung“ der φυσικαὶ ἔννοιαι leistet.

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CHAPTER 14

The Theory of Mixtures and Its Ethical Implications: Role and Responsibility of the Galenic Physician

Maria Luisa Garofalo

Abstract

Galen's physiology has notably provided explanation of the causes of diseases in terms of alteration to the balance of qualities (*eukrasia*), and the consequent dominance of one quality over the others. If this is quite evident and extensively illustrated by Galen himself on a number of occasions in reference to diseases affecting the body, the organs, and their composition (*kataskeuè*), when the diseases affect the soul it is more difficult to find a precise physiological explanation that details any such unbalance. In spite of this, in *QAM* Galen refers to the influence that alterations of the body have on the affections of the soul and, in addition, in his ethical works he insists on the role of the physician and his responsibility in reference to the behaviours of his patients. Galen certainly has in mind the model of integrity that the physician has to provide, but is there more to it than that? If the alteration of the bodily mixtures has consequences for the behaviour of the patients, would the knowledge and the ability to master the *kraseis* owned by the physician imply an ethical responsibility linked to this profession? The aim of this paper is to detect and illustrate the links between the theory of mixtures and the implications it may have in the domain of ethics, taking into consideration both Galen's physiological and ethical works.

1 Introduction

The concept of κρᾶσις is one of the pillars of Galen's physiology and represents the basis for understanding the constitution and functioning of human bodies. The physiological accounts of the elements, their qualities, and their mixtures provide a bottom-up explanation of bodily κατασκευή and activities[1]

1 On the Greek concept of φύσις ἀνθρώπου as a reflection on the constitution, physiology, anatomy, and more generally on the activities proper to the human body, see Van der Eijk 2014: 89–96. On Galen's concept of nature, see Jouanna 2003.

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which follow the κράσεις themselves.[2] The balance of the mixtures is in fact both crucial for the conservation of health and for the correct functioning of the different organs they constitute, while imbalance may lead to the outbreak of disease.

The theory of mixtures, though, not only pertains to physiology and pharmacology, but also has repercussions in the domain of ethics, establishing a common ground of research for both medicine and philosophy. From this perspective, Galen represents an extraordinary resource for understanding the interaction between medicine and philosophy. Strongly influenced by the Hippocratic humoral theory, which he never abandoned, at least in its structural formulation,[3] and also by Plato's tripartition and Aristotle's natural philosophy, Galen developed his own doctrine, drawing from these different traditions.

In *De propriis placitis* (*PP*), the latest of his works,[4] Galen dedicates several chapters to the theory of mixtures and outlines its main features, showing its role within the Galenic Corpus. The objective of this paper is to examine Galen's position in *PP* with a specific focus on the interaction between the physiological aspects of the theory of mixtures and its repercussions in the domain of ethics. As a consequence, it is not possible here to reconstruct the entire doctrine of mixtures that Galen proposes in *PP*, which I will address on another occasion.[5]

2 See *QAM* 3, K. IV 779 (41 M); 5, K IV 787 (48 M). See also Nutton 1999: 212–214, and Vegetti 2013: 201; 246.

3 Galen identified the origin of his own theory of elements with the one presented in *De natura hominis*, as he explains in *HNH*. Nonetheless, Galen's reading of the Hippocratic text is not exempt from a certain degree of re-elaboration: the Hippocratic account does not mention the elements or their qualities but refers to the four humours. See Hipp. *De nat. hom.* 5: "Εἶπον δή, ἃ ἂν φήσω τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, ἀποφανεῖν αἰεὶ ταὐτὰ ἐόντα καὶ κατὰ νόμον καὶ κατὰ φύσιν· φημὶ δὴ εἶναι αἷμα καὶ φλέγμα καὶ χολὴν ξανθήν τε καὶ μέλαιναν", nor does it entail an equivalent in terms of temperaments. On *HNH*, see Jouanna 2012b and 2012c.

4 On the debate around the role of *PP* as Galen's testament, see Nutton 1987; Nutton 1999: 37–45; Boudon Millot – Pietrobelli 2005: 169; Vegetti, 2013: 10. Different views have been offered by Perilli, 2004; Garofalo – Lami, 2012: xix.

5 A full discussion of the reconstruction Galen offers in *PP* would require an analysis of his Hippocratic and philosophical sources, as well as his discussion on the nature of the soul, which seems to rekindle the statements made in *QAM* and show the influence of the Peripatetic discussion on materiality or immateriality of the soul. On Galen's theory of elements and characteristics, see Boudon – Millot 2011; Hankinson 2008a; Jouanna 2012b and 2012c; Kupreeva 2014; van der Eijk 2014 and 2015. On Plato as a source on Hippocrates, see Nutton 1999: 151–152. On the relationship between Galen's element theory and the Atomists, see Leith 2014. On the debate about *QAM's* materialistic or deterministic position, see Garcia Ballester 1971 and 1972; Donini 1974 and 2008; and Hankinson 1993 and 2006. For a *status quaestionis* on Galen's engagement with Aristotle and Aristotelians see Donini 1974 and 1980; Kupreeva 2004; Rashed 2004; Singer 2013: 359–369; Sorabji 2004; Tieleman 1996b; Van der Eijk 2009.

I will start with a brief outline of Galen's epistemological considerations on the temperaments in *PP* and their connection to the tripartition of body and soul. Then, I will analyze in detail his statement in *PP* 8 referring to a connection between the theory of mixtures and the healing of the passions of the soul, highlighting the new perspective offered by the Greek version of *PP.* Finally, I will examine the relationship between this passage and previous works on the subject, e.g. *De temperamentis* (*Temp.*), *Quod animi mores corpora temperamenta sequantur* (*QAM*), *De animi cuiuslibet affectuum et peccatorum dignotione et curatione* (*AD*), and the commentary to *De natura hominis* (*HNH*).

2 Mixtures and Temperaments: Some Questions from *PP*

PP is considered the medical and philosophical testament that Galen wrote towards the end of his career.[6] The text represents his final attempt to reaffirm his stance on questions of e.g. epistemology, psychology, physiology, and philosophy of nature, in order to authenticate his doctrine and propose a clear-cut definition of scientific enquiry. Galen proposes a threefold distinction based on the apodictic level of each theory, and so develops a tripartite epistemology:[7] the highest level of the scale corresponds to scientific knowledge (ἐπιστημονικὴν γνῶσιν); the second relates to the field of what is plausible (πιθανόν);[8] and the third deals with undecidable matters (μηδεμίαν ἔχειν αὐτῶν ἐπιστημονικὴν γνῶσιν).[9] With regard to the mixtures, Galen claims certainty about the elementary composition of human bodies,[10] plausible knowledge regarding the nature of κρᾶσις itself (since we cannot obtain a demonstration to prove if it is either composed by the mixture of the elements or rather of their qualities),[11] and no knowledge at all regarding the composition and οὐσία

6 The discovery of *ms Vlatadon* 14 by A. Pietrobelli (Boudon Millot, Pietrobelli 2005) has helped to solve many of the doubts deriving from lacunas and amendments presented by the Arabo-Latin version of the treatise. In particular, we will examine the modifications brought to chapter 8 and the impact of the rediscovery of the Greek texts that provide key information with regards to the ethical implications of the theory of mixtures. For the Arabo-Latin version edited by V. Nutton for the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, see Nutton 1999.

7 See Frede 1987.

8 For a detailed analysis of the notion of πιθανόν in Galen, see Chiaradonna 2014.

9 Such distinction is not new in Galen. See *MM* I, 3.13, *PHP* IX 7.3-19.

10 See *PP,* 7: "εἶναί τε τούτου γένε(σιν ἐκ) τῆς ποιᾶς κράσεως τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων".

11 In *Temp.* Galen seems to prefer the second point of view, so that of a κρᾶσις of qualities, as it better suits the identification of different temperaments, which depend on different balances of the four qualities.

of the soul or of celestial bodies, matters that Galen avoids, as no scientific argument can be made about them and their investigation would be useless for both medicine and ethics.

The theory of mixtures holds a central role in the treatise and it is addressed in Chapters 4, 5, 7, 8, 12, and 15, which focus on the constitution of body and soul, the importance of internal balance, the characteristics that depend on the prevalence of a certain quality over the others, and the presence of three different principles, depending on three different mixtures in the body. This tripartition is not only addressed physiologically. Rather, it entails a strong anatomical component in addition to its inheritance of Plato's tripartite psychology.[12] The bodily tripartition is presented in *PP* 3:

> On the contrary, that a source of movement comes from the brain, one from the heart, and one from the liver, I have demonstrated this matter in my book on the opinions of Hippocrates and Plato.[13]

As he himself admits, Galen has already presented this model in *PHP*,[14] and in these chapters of *PP* he draws from this account and integrates it with the discussion of mixtures that he had outlined in *Temp.*,[15] providing a thorough and comprehensive explanation of the constitution of body and soul,[16] on the double assumption of the tripartite structure on one hand and of the elementary composition of the κρᾶσεις on the other. In *PP* Galen subscribes to the theory of *Temp.* without modifications:

12 Galen endorses Plato's tripartite structure, despite modifying it to reflect the observations gathered through anatomical dissections. He maintains the definition of three εἴδη of the soul and their respective localization in the brain, heart, and liver. See *Resp.* IV 433a-444e; *Phaedr.* 253d-254a; and *Tim.* 69c-72e. On Galen's reading of Plato's psychology, see De Lacy 1972, Tieleman 1996a, and Schiefsky 2012.

13 See *PP* 3, Nutton 1999: 61. The translation has slightly been revised on the basis of the Greek text of *Vlatadon* 14. See Boudon Millot – Pietrobelli 2005: 193: "Περὶ μέντοι τῆς κινῆσεως ἀρχὴν μὲν ἕτεραν εἶναι κατὰ τὸν ἐγκέφαλον, ἕτεραν δὲ κατὰ τῆν καρδίαν, ἄλλεν δὲ καθ'ἧπαρ ἔγραψα τὰς ἀποδείξεις, ἐξ ὧν ἐμαυτὸν ἔπεισα, διὰ τῆς πραγματείας ἐκείνες ἐν ᾗ Περὶ τῶν Ἱπποκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος δογμάτων ὁ λόγος ἐστίν."

14 See *PHP* III, 7; IV, 2.1-12; VII, 3.1-5; IX, 9.7-8 and IX 9.12.

15 See *Temp.* II.1, Singer 1997.

16 Indeed, the concept of mixtures does not appear for the first time in Galen but can be traced back several centuries, up to the Hippocratic treatises *On Regimen* and *De natura hominis.* Variations on the theory of elements in terms of humoral doctrine can be also found in Praxagoras; see Galen, *Nat. Fac.* 2,9 (2.141,5 K) and Diocles, fr. 40; see Van der Eijk 2001: 79. On the tradition of the theory of mixtures see Jouanna, 2012a: 308–310; Van der Eijk 2015: 669–678.

> I showed in my work *On temperaments* that there are nine types of temperament, four simple temperaments, four mixed and one balanced. And this one is best because the types of simple temperaments derive from the dominance of one element, the hot, the cold, the dry, or the wet. But the mixed types derive from the dominance of the cold and the wet together, or the warm and the dry, or of the warm and the wet, or of the dominance of coldness and dryness. All these temperaments deserve scant praise; but far better than all these is the type of temperament in which none of the four elements predominates, but where all are in a balanced mixture and none dominates another.[17]

Galen affirms that no mixture in which one or two of the elements prevail over the others can be considered optimal, as this would entail that its elements and capacities are unbalanced. Hence, the best temperament is that where the four elements are equally and harmonically mixed, and where no prevalence of any element can be observed. Such a state is defined as εὐκρασία[18] and it presents the right proportion among all qualities.

As anticipated though, the implications of Galen's theory of mixtures are not limited to medical applications. The transition from an exclusively bodily investigation to the domain of psychology is presented in Chapter 7:

> I also declare that the generation of the body depends on a sort of mixture, identical with the mixture of the four elements; and if the soul arrives with the body, then it too is created from the four elements. But it is impossible that the soul should come from one thing and the sensible body from another, because the essence of the soul does not exist (independently) by itself but is found in conjunction with the appearance, I mean the form, of the body. You may understand from me when I

17 See Galen, *PP,* 5: "Ὥσπερ γε κἀν τοῖς Περὶ κράσεων ἐνν(έα δια)φορᾶς εἶναι κράσεων, ἁπλᾶς μὲν τέσσαρας, συνθέτους δὲ τέσσαρας, ἔξωθεν δὲ τούτων τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ ἄμε<μ>πτον· (…) δὲ τὰς μὲν ἁπλᾶς δυσκρασίας κατ' ἐπικράτειαν ἑνὸς τῶν στοιχείων ἤτοι τοῦ θερμοῦ ἢ τοῦ ψυχροῦ ἢ τοῦ ὑγρού ἢ τοῦ ξ(ηροῦ), τὰς συνθέτους δέ ποτε μὲν ἅμα τοῦ ὑγροῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ κρατούντων ἢ τοῦ θερμοῦ καὶ ξηροῦ, ἢ ὅτε δὲ τοῦ θερμοῦ (μετὰ ὑγρό)τητος, ἢ τοῦ ψυχροῦ μετὰ ξηρότητος· ἀλλὰ ταύτας μὲν οὐκ ἀμέμπτους εἶναι, τὴν δὲ ἀρίστην οὐδὲν ἔχειν ἐπι(κρατοῦν) τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμμετρίαν ἄμε<μ>πτον αὐτὴν κεκρᾶσθαι." Engl. transl. Nutton 1999.

18 Also referred to as συμμετρία. See e.g. *San. tu.* VI, 15 K.

> say “in conjunction with the appearance” that the matter which they are considering is in some way matter without any qualities.[19]

Indeed, the body-soul relationship presents in Galen a variety of perspectives that include medical, philosophical, and ethical matters.[20] The physician’s activity has consequences that derive from epistemological reflection, and that have an ethical and social impact. In particular, in *PP* 8 Galen briefly hints at the ethical consequences of medical action on the bodily mixtures themselves, depending on the knowledge of the tripartite structure of body and soul. The section is particularly interesting, especially because it represents one of the occurrences in which the discovery of *Vlatadon* 14 has shown relevant modifications in the text: in the Greek manuscript, in fact, Galen links his reflection on the tripartite structure of the soul and its temperaments to the theme of the passions of the soul. In the Latin manuscripts, we still find the distinction among the three principles of the soul, but in the two versions, Galen reaches quite different conclusions, each with profound implications for the meaning of the text.

Here are the two versions:

> Et propter hos viros composui hunc meum librum ad exercitandum eos in probationibus quas posui super unamquamque sententiarum quas

19 See *PP* 7. I have here kept the translation by Nutton 1999. The Greek text is corrupt and presents several lacunas that might compromise the understanding and interpretation of this passage; nonetheless, no major modifications have been made by the Latin translator. I follow the reconstruction proposed by Lami 2010, 92–93: “Εἶναί τε τούτου γένε(σιν ἐκ) τῆς ποιᾶς κράσεως τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων, καὶ εἴπερ (… ἡ ψυχὴ δια π)λάτ(τεται σὺν τῷ) σώματι, τὴν γένεσιν ……. (τὴν) τῶν τεσσάρων στοιχείων κρᾶσιν αὐτὴν γίνεσθαι, οὐκ ἄλλ(ης) (ἐχ)ούσης τῆς (ψυ)χῆς γενέσεως, ἄλλης δὲ τῷ αἰσθητικῷ σώματι· μ…(οὐκ) εἶναί που ψυχῆς οὐσίαν καθ’ ἑ(αυτὴν ….ον) εἶδός τι τοῦ σώματος ὑπάρχειν αὐτήν· ἄκουε δέ μου λέγοντος εἶδος ὡς πρὸς τὴν τῆς ὕλης ἀντίθεσιν (….ναι) νοοῦμεν ὅσον τὸ ἐφ’ ἑαυτῇ.” This passage raises questions about Galen’s physicalist positions on the composition of the soul, already presented in *QAM*, which I cannot address here. For a *status quaestionis* on this matter, see *supra* n. 5.

20 I adopt Singer’s reconstruction of Galen’s discussion on the body-soul relationship. Singer identifies five main perspectives deriving from the topics and the aim of the writings: 1) Ethical discussions of the soul and how to treat it within an independent philosophical discourse; 2) Dietetic discussions, which list what would elsewhere be classed as soul-affections in a continuum of factors related to bodily health; 3) Pathological discussions, which talk of the affections of the soul under medical headings; 4) Other philosophical discussions, which give an analysis of the soul in bodily terms – whether in terms of physiological functions, where the chief example is *The Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, or of bodily mixture (of the basic ‘qualities’), as most clearly exemplified by *The Capacities of the Soul*; and 5) Biological or embryological discussions, which seem to give the soul a strong causal role – or at least discuss such a role – in reproduction or in the account of animal characteristics; see Singer 2013: 25–30.

nominavi in hoc. et prohibeo eos de inventione sillogismorum istarum propositionum, quia oportet in inventionibus bonitatum anime quod debeat scire quod in nobis sunt tria principia per motus tres diversos in genere: et oportet perscrutari hoc in curationibus egritudinum accidentium anime. Et nos oportet scire quod principium istorum trium motuum sit in cerebro unius, alterius in corde, tertii in epate. et hoc demonstravit Plato per operationem in libro suo, quod anima habet tres species, et omisit nominare locum corporis in quo habitat unaqueque istarum trium specierum.[21]

Τοῖς τοιούτοις οὖν ὁ λόγος ὅδε γέγραπται προτρέπων ἐπὶ τὰς γεγραμμένας ἡμῖν ἀποδείξεις ὑπὲρ ἑκάστου τῶν εἰρημένων δογμάτων ἐλθόντας ἐκεῖνα σκοπεῖσθαι μετὰ συμπερασμάτων αὐτῷ <καὶ> αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτὰ κρίνειν ἐπιχειρεῖν. εὐθὺς γοῦν ὅτι τρεῖς ἀρχαὶ κινήσεων ἑτερογενῶν εἰσιν ἐν ἡμῖν ἀναγκαῖον ἐγν (ῶσθαι) πρός τε τὸ ἐξευρεῖν τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετὰς πρός τε τὸ ἐξ ἀριθμὸν εὑρεῖν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετῶν ὅπως τε κτή(σασθαι) αὐτὰς ἔστιν· ἀναγκαῖον δὲ καὶ πρός τὴν τῶν ψυχικῶν παθῶν ἴασιν. Οὐ μὴν ὅτι γε τὸ μὲν ἐν ἐγκεφάλῳ κατῴκισται, τὸ δ'ἐ(ν καρδίᾳ), τὸ δ'ἐν ἥπατι τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐστὶν ταῦτα˙ καὶ τοῦτ'ἔργῳ Πλάτων ἔδειξεν ἐν μὲν τῇ Πολιτείᾳ τρία τῆς ψυχῆς εἴδη λέγων εἶ(ναι) χωρίς τοῦ περὶ τῶν τόπων τοῦ σώματος ἐν οἷς ἕκαστον οἰκεῖ μνημονεῦσαι.[22]

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21 "It is for men like this that I have written the relevant book of mine, in order to train them in the proofs which I have set out for each of the opinions I have mentioned in it. I am also stopping them from discovering formal arguments for propositions of this kind, since in trying to find the virtues of the soul one has (only) to know that in man there are three principles for three motions that are different in kind; and one should look out for this when treating the affections of the soul. We should also know that of the principles of these three motions, one is located in the brain, one in the heart, the third in the liver. Plato showed this fact in his book, that the soul has three forms, although he forgot to name the organ of the body where each of these three forms has its seat." Engl. transl. Nutton 1999: 82–83.

22 "De fait, c'est pour de tels gens que j'ai composé ce traité, pour les inciter, en abordant les démonstrations que j'ai exposées pour chacune des opinions dont il est question, à considerer celles-ci, dans les limites imparties à ce traité, et à entreprendre de les soumettre au jugement une par une. Dans l'immédiat donc, qu'il existe un nous trois principes à l'origine des mouvements de genre différent, c'est ce qu'il est nécessaire de savoir pour découvrir les vertus de l'âme, pour trouver que les vertus de l'âme sont au nombre de six et comment il est possible de les acquérir. Et c'est de plus nécessaire pour le traitement des passions de l'âme. En revanche, que le premier principe réside dans le cerveau, l'autre dans le coeur et le troisième dans le foie ne fait pas partie des connaissances nécessaires pour cela. Et c'est, de fait, ce qu'a montré Platon dans la *République* quand il dit qu'il existe trois espèces d'âme sans mentionner les lieux du corps dans lesquels réside chacune." Fr. transl. Boudon – Pietrobelli 2005: 201.

Both the Latin and the Greek versions admit that the soul has three different principles, three ἀρχαὶ κινήσεως generating movement within the body. Galen follows the Platonic account of tripartition, stating that to each part of the soul corresponds a virtue, i.e. wisdom, courage, and temperance,[23] and also identifies a connection between physical well-being and moral behaviour, affirming that the knowledge of these virtues is necessary to the healing of the passions of the soul. In addition, both versions show the implicit connection that Galen establishes between two levels of argumentation, one relating to the anatomo-physiological sphere, and the other to that of ethics, and demonstrate a continuity with his position in other treatises where the bond between bodily and psychic well-being was posed both in medical and moral terms.[24]

The main difference appears in the following conclusion. In the Latin version, Galen highlights the importance of determining the location of the three principles, which turn out to be three bodily seats, although he recognizes that Plato omitted this connection in the *Republic*.[25] In order to determine the healing of the passions of the soul, it is necessary to locate them, and Galen posits a comparison, if not an identification, between the above-mentioned two levels: one involves the moral virtues, and the other the physical/anatomical parts of the body.

By contrast, in the Greek text we encounter a different conclusion relating to the bodily seats of the soul, as Galen says that although the location of the three parts/forms of the soul is crucial for natural, moral, and political philosophy, it does not actually affect medical practice, and hence it does not represent necessary knowledge for the physician. This conclusion not only differs from the Latin text, but it is also distant from the position expressed in other treatises, where the determination of the soul's bodily seats is central. In *PHP*, for instance, Galen does not just present the localization of the soul as derived from Plato (as he does in *PP* 8), but actually demonstrates it with reference to anatomical dissection and physiological activities,[26] which are pivotal for the endorsement of tripartition, as a result of an apodictic investigation.

A couple of questions arise from what has been analyzed so far: is there a way to explain Galen's ambiguity regarding the importance of the localization

23 See *In Plat. Tim. Comm.* III, 2.

24 See e.g. *PHP*, *QAM*, AD.

25 Galen in fact admits that the localization of the tripartite soul is carried out in the *Timaeus*, and is in line with what is said in the *Republic*. The lack of detail about the localization of the part of the soul in the latter text would depend on the different nature of the two dialogues. See Nutton 1999: 168–169.

26 See *PHP* VII, 3.1-5.

of the soul? And how does such reference to the moral and ethical perspective on the passions of the soul fit into the discussion of mixtures and elements into which this extract of Chapter 8 comes to be inserted? The two questions may not be entirely disconnected from one another. As to the second, Chapter 8 is a parenthesis in the discussion of bodily mixtures and pharmacological theory that Galen is developing in the central chapters of *PP*, so the reasons for its inclusion seem to have a certain interest for the debate on the role of the theory of mixtures. Unfortunately, the reference to the link between the causes of movement and the therapy of the soul, and hence between the localization of the soul and its ethical consequences, is very brief, and, consequently, it is quite difficult to venture a definitive answer.

However, it is still possible to detect at least three interesting points which are further developed in other works and may suggest an interpretation of this reference: (i) the acceptance of the theory of soul's tripartition, according to which every part of the soul is considered as a distinct and specific cause of movement;[27] (ii) the assumption that different virtues belong to different parts of the soul; and (iii) the importance of the identification of these three distinct principles for the healing of the passions of the soul.

3 The Answers from *AD*, *QAM* and *Mor*.

Even though Galen does not dedicate a systematic analysis to the body-soul relationship or to the tensions deriving from the different perspectives he holds when addressing different aspects of this relationship, nonetheless he deals with many elements of it, such as the connections between bodily constitution and temperaments; bodily alterations and their effects on the soul, with particular attention to the alterations involving the brain and its κρᾶσις; therapy of the soul; and the ethical implications of medical practice in re-establishing the correct mixture.

Among the writings dealing with these topics, Galen seem here to refer to *QAM*, *Temp*., *De animi cuiuslibet affectuum et peccatorum dignotione et curatione* (*AD*), and *De moribus* (*Mor.*). *QAM* and *Temp.* are a constant presence throughout *PP*. In particular, *QAM* represents the grounds on which a more physicalist view of the soul may be ventured, which returns, although tentatively, in Chapters 7 and 15. In *QAM*, in fact, Galen adapts the tripartite structure of the soul deriving from the Platonic tripartition – also influenced

27 See *supra*, nn. 8, 9.

by Aristotle's biology[28] – to the theory of temperaments that characterizes the three bodily systems: brain, heart, and liver. What Galen suggests, then, is a development and modification of Plato's doctrine that implies a much more physicalist perspective, evidently detaching Galen's theory from an orthodox Platonic stance. In other words, Galen affirms that an alteration in the composition of one of the organs that hosts part of the soul would have repercussions on the soul itself, as the soul is not different from the composition of the body in which it resides:

> When, then, the rational part of the soul, which has a single-form substance, is changed along with the mixture of the body, what must one think that the mortal form of the soul undergoes? Is it not evident that it is in every way a slave to the body? And it is better to state, not that it is 'slave to', but that the mortal [part] of the soul actually *is* precisely this: the mixture of the body. And so the mixture of the heart is the spirited form of the soul; the mixture of the liver is what Plato calls 'desiderative' and is called 'nutritive' and 'vegetative' by Aristotle.[29]

And also:

> For the purposes of the present argument, we have taken into assumption both that our substance undergoes alteration and that its mixture brings about the natural body at the homogeneous level; and have shown that the substance of the soul is composed according to the mixture.[30]

These passages show very clearly that not only does Galen see a connection between bodily composition and the soul that inhabits a given organ, which is itself the result of a certain mixture, but that he actually identifies the κρᾶσις of the specific organ with that of the soul, or at least its mortal part, hence

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28 On the influence of Aristotle in the theorization of the third part of the soul, see *PHP* VII, 3.2. For the Peripatetic debate on the soul, see n. 5.

29 Cf *QAM* 4K782-3 (44–45 M): "ὁπότ' οὖν τὸ λογιστικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς μονοειδῆ <τὴν> οὐσίαν ἔχον τῇ τοῦ σώματος κράσει συμμεταβάλλεται, τί χρὴ νομίσαι πάσχειν τὸ θνητὸν εἶδος αὐτῆς; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι πάντη δουλεύει τῷ σώματι; ἄμεινον δὲ φάναι μὴ δουλεύειν ἀλλ' αὐτὸ δὴ τοῦτ' εἶναι τὸ θνητὸν τῆς ψυχῆς, τὴν κρᾶσιν τοῦ σώματος [ἐδείχθη γὰρ ἔμπροσθεν ἡ θνητὴ ψυχὴ κρᾶσις οὖσα τοῦ σώματος]. ἡ μὲν οὖν τῆς καρδίας κρᾶσις τὸ θυμοειδὲς εἶδός ἐστι τῆς ψυχῆς, ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἥπατος τὸ καλούμενον ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος μὲν ἐπιθυμητικόν, θρεπτικὸν δὲ καὶ φυτικὸν <ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους>." Engl. transl. Singer 2013: 385–386.

30 Cf *QAM* 4K785 (46 M): "πρὸς δὲ τὸν παρόντα λόγον ὑπόθεσιν λαβόντες <τὸ> ἀλλοιοῦσθαί τε τὴν οὐσίαν ἡμῶν καὶ τὴν κρᾶσιν αὐτῆς ἐργάζεσθαι τὸ φυσικὸν σῶμα ἐν ὁμοιομερεῖ, τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς οὐσίαν ἐδείξαμεν κατὰ τὴν κρᾶσιν συνισταμένην." Engl. transl. Singer 2013: 388.

implying the possibility of operating on the soul's alterations just as we do on the bodily ones. This approach is not new in Galen, as we can find similar statements, for instance, in *De locis affectis*, where Galen identifies the reason for psychological illness, or impairment of the rational capacities as dependent on a lack of balance in the κρᾶσις of the brain.[31]

AD appears here for the first time through the reference to the healing of the errors and passions of the soul. Despite the brief mention of it, *AD* might help to understand Galen's statement in *PP* 8 that it is unnecessary for the physician to know the localization of the three parts of the soul. At the beginning of *AD*, in fact, Galen addresses the therapy of the soul, affirming that it is not strictly pertinent to the physician, but rather to wise men whose guidance may support and correct affected behaviours.[32] *AD*'s focus is ethical: the identification of the passions of the soul and their cure is not specifically assigned to the physician, nor are they dealt with from an exclusively medical and physiological perspective. In fact, when Galen refers to the importance of the choice of a good master who will have the task of remarking every time an affection is evident in one's behaviour, he compares the role of such a mentor in healing the soul to that of a physician who cures the body, but he does not in any way imply that the master should be trained in medicine.[33]

As Galen himself admits in *LS*,[34] *AD* belongs to his moral works and pays no attention to the physiological causes/influences of the body on the temperaments. Rather, the main focus is on the distinction between the behaviours deriving from the irrational parts of the soul on one hand and the rational part on the other, which is based on the notion of τέλος.[35] As a consequence,

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31 See *Loc. Aff.* VIII K. 126–128. See also Garcia – Ballester 1972; Pigeaud 1988.

32 See *AD* I, 3–6 K.

33 See *AD* I, 8–9 K: "ὅταν οὖν ἀκούσῃς τινὰ τῶν κατὰ τὴν πόλιν [ὃν μήτε φιλήσειν οἶδε μήτε <μισήσειν>] ἐπαινούμενον ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἐπὶ τῷ μηδένα κολακεύειν, ἐκείνῳ προσφοιτήσας τῇ σαυτοῦ πείρᾳ κρῖνον, εἰ τοιοῦτός ἐστιν, οἷος εἶναι λέγεται, καὶ πρῶτον, ἐὰν ἴδῃς αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν πλουσίων τε καὶ πολὺ δυναμένων ἢ καὶ τὰς τῶν μονάρχων οἰκίας ἐπιόντα συνεχῶς, γίγνωσκε μάτην ἀκηκοέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον ἀληθεύειν ἅπαντα (ταῖς γὰρ τοιαύταις κολακείαις ἕπεται καὶ τὸ ψεύδεσθαι), δεύτερον <ἢ προσαγορεύοντα> ἢ παραπέμποντ τοὺς τοιούτους ὁρῶν αὐτὸν ἢ καὶ συνδειπνοῦντα. τοιοῦτον γάρ τις ἑλόμενος βίον οὐ μόνον <οὐκ> ἀληθεύει, ἀλλὰ καὶ κακίαν ὅλην ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἔχει, | φιλοχρήματος ὢν ἢ φίλαρχος ἢ φιλότιμος ἢ φιλόδοξος, ἤ τινα τούτων ἢ πάντα. τὸν δὲ μὴ προσαγορεύοντα μήτε παραπέμποντα μήτε συνδειπνοῦντα τοῖς πολὺ δυναμένοις ἢ πλουτοῦσι καὶ κεκολασμένῃ τῇ διαίτῃ χρώμενον ἐλπίσας ἀληθεύσειν εἰς βαθυτέραν ἀφικέσθαι πειρῶ γνῶσιν, ὁποῖός τίς ἐστιν (ἐν συνουσίαις δ' αὕτη πολυχρονιωτέραις γίγνεται), κἂν εὕρῃς τοιοῦτον, ἰδίᾳ ποτὲ μόνῳ διαλέχθητι παρακαλέσας, ὅ τι ἂν <ἐν> σοὶ βλέπῃ τῶν εἰρημένων παθῶν, εὐθέως δηλοῦν, ὡς χάριν ἕξοντι τούτου μεγίστην ἡγησομένῳ τε σωτῆρα μᾶλλον ἢ εἰ νοσοῦντα τὸ σῶμα διέσωσε."

34 See *LS* XV, 1.

35 For an analysis of the concept of τέλος and its role in *AD*, see Donini 1988.

the perspective from which the passions of the soul are addressed conveys the influence of the philosophical tradition[36] and the necessity of recognizing the type of affection on the basis of the part of the soul that generates them, which implies the knowledge of their location. More specifically, in *AD,* the physician uses rational discussions and reasoning to cure his patients,[37] in order to strengthen the rational part of the soul and re-establish the unbalance that has been caused by the taking over of one of the other two parts.

A different point of view on the cure of the affections of the soul emerges from those treatises dealing with dietetic, physiology, and pathology, where the role of re-establishing the correct balance and identifying the appropriate therapy for the affections of the soul is competence of the physician.[38] In *QAM*, for instance, Galen posits a causal relationship between an unbalanced mixture of the brain and a psychological disturbance.[39] Such a connection between the brain's κρᾶσις and the outbreak of the mental disease is also present in *De locis affectis* III, where Galen examines the psychological affections in terms of consequences of the bad mixture characterizing the brain. In particular, in III.5-6 he presents an account of a young man who has lost his memory, and examines the case both in terms of δυσκρασία and of soul's bodily seats. Galen affirms that it is necessary to understand that the faculty of memory, or more specifically the ruling part of the soul, does not reside in the heart, as the Stoics affirmed,[40] but rather in the brain. The identification of the bodily seat was necessary to determine the affected organ and to identify its state so as to propose a therapy, which had to be of the opposite nature as that of the κρᾶσις characterizing the part. It is interesting to notice how Galen, in referring to the available medical literature and, in particular, building on the experience of

36 Galen himself cites the Stoics, Aristotle, and Plato for their interest and their works on the treatment of the affections of the soul. See *AD*, 3K: "γέγραπται μὲν οὖν καὶ Χρυσίππῳ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς τῶν φιλοσόφων θεραπευτικὰ γράμματα τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς παθῶν, εἴρηται δὲ καὶ πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλους <περὶ τούτων> καὶ τῶν ἑταίρων αὐτοῦ καὶ πρὸ τούτων ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος· καὶ ἦν μὲν βέλτιον ἐξ ἐκείνων μανθάνειν αὐτά, ὥσπερ κἀγώ."

37 See *AD* IV: "[…] πλέον αὐτῷ διελέχθην ὑποθέμενος, ὅπως χρὴ παιδαγωγῆσαι τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν θυμοειδὲς, τῷ λόγῳ δηλοντότι, καὶ οὐ διὰ μαστίγων, ἀλλ' ἑτέρῳ τρόπῳ παιδαγωγῆσαι διῆλθον. Ἐκεῖνος μὲν οὖν ἐν ἑαυτῷ προσοησάμενος ἑαυτοῦ πολὺ βελτίων ἐγένετο." See also *MM*, X, 5; *De san. tuenda* VI, 14.

38 See Vegetti 2012: p. 270.

39 On Galen's statement regarding the dependency of mental disorders on the brain's κρᾶσις in *QAM*, see Singer 2013: 346–354. See also Vegetti 2012: p. 272–276.

40 Galen firmly condemned the Stoic view according to which the ruling part of the soul resides in the heart, as this account does not consider the anatomical evidence and demonstrations showing the connections between the nerves and the brain; see *PHP* V, 1.1-3; VII, 1.4-7.

Archigenes, examines the proposed therapy in terms of mixtures and criticizes the latter for not adopting the right remedy for two main reasons: (i) Archigenes considered the heart the seat of the λογιστικόν, and yet (ii) opted for remedies that applied to the head. The correct approach, which Galen suggests between the lines, would have been to consider the alterations of the mixtures of the brain according to the predominance of elementary qualities, both to understand the nature of the alterations and the appropriate therapies to reestablish the right balance. In other words, Galen understands psychological illness, or the impairment of the rational capacities, as depending on a lack of balance in the κρᾶσις of the brain. As underlined by Singer, "we get quite a wide range of medically conceived mental disturbances, which are brought into close relation to physical causes, understood in terms of the four qualities (hot, cold, wet, and dry) and, relatedly, to lifestyle factors that may pathologically increase one or more of those qualities."[41]

Finally, in *Mor.* Galen analyses several factors that influence the soul and, consequently, the ἦθος.[42] As already affirmed in other treatises, the physician is the only one who knows and recognizes the balance constituting the best temperament, and he is also the one who has the ability and the means to restore the right mixture. Now, since the constitution of the body and of the soul seem to be characterized by the same elements,[43] and since the temperaments of the soul depend on the mixture and balance of these elements, the physician will not only be responsible for the healing of the body, but also for the healing of the passions of the soul. As also affirmed in *De sanitate tuenda* (*San. tu.*),[44] if the body receives an inappropriate diet, if it does not exercise, and if it does not follow a healthy lifestyle, then it will be corrupted, just as its soul would be.

The reciprocity of the relation between body and soul is clear in *Mor.*, as exemplified by the final attribution of different ἤθη to the three different parts of the body (just as in *PP*) but also in the role that the soul has in preserving the health of the body:

> Fineness of the soul is not [precisely] like fineness of the body, for we can see that bodily health does not necessarily follow from bodily fineness; because [the fineness of] the body does not know about the things that

41 See Singer 2013: 27. Temperaments depend on the balance of the mixtures and are influenced by lifestyle and regimen, not by birth conditions.

42 No extant version of *Mor.* is available in Greek. The only source we possess for this treatise derives from an Arabic compendium, and some fragments in Arabic and Greek; see Singer 2013: 109–118. See also Zonta 1995.

43 See *supra*, nn. 5, 19.

44 See *San. tu.* VI, 32; VI, 40–43 K.

> cause illness to the body. The knowledge of the soul, however, from which comes its fineness, knows the elements of which the body is composed and from which the affections of the soul are generated, composed, and increased. The knowledge of this is followed by the discovery of their treatments. For this reason we do not see a fine soul that has an illness, as we sometimes see a very fine body that has an illness. This is necessarily so because the knowledgeable and beautiful soul first of all preserves itself in health, then attends to the body since it needs it in order to act. The body, however, knows nothing about its own health and cannot preserve it.[45]

It is evident how the soul, and I would suggest the rational soul, plays a central role in the control of the body and its health, as it is in charge of controlling and educating the body according to the knowledge of the bodily κράσεις of which the body itself is totally unaware. In particular, treatment follows the moment of distinguishing, on one hand, what is good for the soul and the body, i.e. what leads to the balance and to what Galen call "fineness"; and, on the other hand, what is not good and would lead towards unbalance.

The fundamental concept underlying this argument is outlined also in *QAM*, as we have seen. It is precisely that human temperaments depend on the mixtures of the soul and, more specifically, on the temperaments of the bodily parts in which the parts of the soul reside. As Garcia-Ballester points out, according to Galen there is "a continuum between body and soul, both in the case of mental illness (e.g. dementia, frenzy, melancholia) or in disorders of a moral nature, but he left in the dark the answer to the question of exactly what continuum."[46] Therefore, Galen identifies the role and responsibility of the physician as recovering the correct bodily mixtures in order to intervene with the temperaments of the soul, which are therefore perceived as the visible and demonstrated result of the bodily κρᾶσις. In fact, further on in the same treatise, Galen affirms that:

> Those of them who hold that all human beings are receptive to virtue (which is equivalent to saying that no one is born naturally bad), and those who hold that none chooses justice for its own sake, both have a partial view of human nature. For not everyone is hostile to justice, nor

45 See *Mor.* 43 Kr, 14–22. Engl. transl. Singer 2013.

46 See Garcia – Ballester 2002.

> is naturally a friend to it, and in each case they have become as they are through the mixtures of their bodies.[47]

If we accept such a tight connection between temperaments and behaviours, what is the role of the physician in confronting the affections of the soul? Generally speaking, disease in Galen, just as in Hippocrates, is an unnatural activity, παρὰ φύσιν ἐνέργεια, deriving from an external element that works in association with bodily predispositions. Indeed, the theory of the nine temperaments promotes the image of a *Natura peccans* very different from the one presented in the anatomical treatises. On this image, in fact, Nature is described as having a faulty characterization,[48] and as needing the support of the physician to re-establish balance in case the good temperament has been affected. A bad temperament does not derive from the negativity of matter *per se*, but from an erroneous or unbalanced mixture, which entails the possibility of errors in the action of Nature. In *QAM*, Galen comes to regard Nature as fallible and the role of the physician changes to reflect this new perspective. Whereas, in fact, in *UP* we are presented with the model of a physician who discovers and contemplates the ability of Nature, in *QAM* the Galenic doctor is responsible for supporting and also correcting the action of an imperfect and defective Nature.

This approach, deriving from Galen's concept of human nature and from his theory of mixtures, is highly indebted to the Hippocratic tradition, which represents a more archaic stage of the medical τέχνη than the anatomo-physiology of Alexandrian practitioners, but also a different type of scientific rationality. In the Hippocratic tradition, disease was conceived as the combined effect of a system of external causes and a bodily disposition facilitating their action. It is this model of pre-anatomical body that Galen has in mind in *QAM* and any such point of view on pathology changes the relationship between the physician and Nature, as was outlined in the anatomical works.

Galen's therapeutic method is hence founded on two main elements: the assumption that the physician can guide patients on how to preserve their health by following a correct lifestyle,[49] and that he can restore the correct mixture

47 See *QAM* 4 K814 (73 M): "οἵ τε γὰρ ἡγούμενοι πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἐπιδεκτικοὺς ἀρετῆς ὑπάρχειν [ὅπερ ἴσον ἐστὶ τῷ μηδένα γενέσθαι φυσικόν] οἵ τε μηδένα τὴν δικαιοσύνην αἱρεῖσθαι αὐτήν, ἐξ ἡμίσεος ἑκάτεροι τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἑωράκασι φύσιν. οὔτε γὰρ ἅπαντες ἐχθροὶ φύονται δικαιοσύνης οὔθ' ἅπαντες φίλοι, διὰ τὰς κράσεις τῶν σωμάτων ἑκάτεροι τοιοῦτοι γενόμενοι". Engl. transl. Singer 2013: 405.

48 As opposed, for instance, to the one presented in *UP* XVII 3K IV.366.

49 See D*e san. tuenda* I, 15, 5-9.

through his knowledge of the temperaments, their alterations, and his complex pharmacology, acting on the bodily mixtures.

It is worth quoting at length a page from *De symtpomatum causis*, where the parallel between body and soul and the common cause of outbreak of disease/*dyskrasia* arise. Galen is addressing the effects that excessive cooling or heating might have in cases of fever, and offers a comparison with the movement of heat in the affections of the soul:

> Perhaps I shall have the audacity to give an opinion about the substance of the soul itself in some other work, but for what is now at hand, apart from being audacious, this is also superfluous. It seems, then, that whatever this might be, it is one of two things: either it uses the primary organs for all functions by the pneuma or the blood, or the heat in one or both together, or it is in these themselves. It is possible to see clearly the movements of this in many other affections, and particularly in those that are psychical. For example, there are fear and anger; the one leads and draws together the pneuma and blood inward towards the arche with a cooling of what is superficial, whereas the other passes out, pours forth and heats. That which is compounded from both is called being anxious, and is irregular in its movements. Accordingly, the pulses of the arteries and of the heart are very small and very weak in those who are afraid, but very large and very violent in those who are angry, and are irregular in those who are anxious. In the case of shame, the movement of the psychical capacity is primarily inward. Then, having collected together, it undertakes a return again towards the exterior. If, however, it does not return, it is fear, not shame. […] Accordingly, some have also died in sudden fears, whenever the soul, weak in nature and possessed suddenly by a strong affection, is quenched and smothered. For quenching occurs due to the very nature of the affection which has its genesis in the cooling, whereas smothering is due to all the blood gathering together and being borne to the arche. No one who is angry dies, as there would be neither a cooling of heat nor a dissolution of strength. Nevertheless, some pusillanimous men have died when rejoicing greatly, just like those who are afraid. For the psychic capacity does not move towards the exterior because of strength and seething at the same time but quite the contrary, in that, if it previously had some strength, this it now releases and disperses. So, for example, it is broken up whenever, being relaxed to the greatest degree, it is borne towards the exterior.[50]

50 See *De sympt. caus.* II, VII.191-194K.

As in *PP*, Galen is not interested in giving a final definition of what the soul is. Nonetheless, he illustrates quite clearly the effects of the alteration of the mixtures in psychic affections. This is confirmed also further on in the treatise when he identifies cooling as the cause for dementia (*μώρωσις*) and amnesia (*λήθη*),[51] and, more generally all the deliria (*παραφροσύνη*) as "defective movements of the authoritative capacity, [that] arise on the basis of abnormal humours or through the *δυσκρασία* of these in the brain."[52] Psychic affections, in this sense, are not different from bodily ones and both the causes and the symptoms of psychic/mental diseases are subject to the same categorisation as the bodily ones.[53] The brain with its affections is considered to be no different than other organs and their affections, and it is therefore treated just as the other organs are.

It is therefore the responsibility of the physician to identify the lack of balance, its causes, and the remedies that can be applied, such as diet, φάρμακα, and also changes in the lifestyle of the patient. Along these lines, and in connection with the role of pharmacology in therapeutics, in *PP* 9 Galen addresses his views on pharmacology, illustrating how tightly linked it is to the right assessment of mixtures, as a consideration of the modifications that can be brought about by drugs. The key element is that the physician must be able to distinguish between various alterations and to explain how their natures differ. This competence involves making inferences either from the active qualities or from the whole of the substance:

> I also declared that it was of great value to know what many doctors have neglected, i.e. the change that happens in the body. There are two kinds of change: one involves a change through one or two qualities being active, i.e. the hot, the cold, the wet, and the dry; the other in a different way involves a change through the totality of the substance being active.[54]

The physician is thus in charge of the bodily and psychological health of his patients, and his action also has an outcome in their ethical behaviours, which results from the κρᾶσις. In fact, in *QAM* Galen affirms that "not everyone is hostile to justice, nor is naturally a friend to it, and in each case they have become

51 See *ivi*, VII, 201K.

52 See *ivi*, VII, 202K.

53 Galen categorises diseases as (i) dyscrasia of homoiomeric bodies; (ii) changes to the structure of bodily parts; and (iii) dissolution of continuity. In parallel, he distinguishes the symptoms as (i) loss of function; (ii) reduction of function; and (iii) abnormality of function.

54 See *PP* 9, Engl. transl. Nutton 1999: 85.

as they are through the mixtures of their bodies."[55] This of course should not make us believe that Galen is prone to justifying unethical behaviours because they depend on the bodily κρᾶσις. Both in the body and in the soul, in fact, there are conditions that can be cured, and that can benefit from the action of the physician, while there are others where no improvement is possible and medical intervention is useless. The physician's task, then, is to recognize the balanced and the unbalanced κράσις, and his objective is, where possible, to correct or eliminate deviance.

4 Conclusion

The analysis of *PP* 8 has provided the *incipit* for an enquiry regarding the relationship between the theory of mixtures and the therapy of the soul. The questions raised by the Greek version of the passage have highlighted the issue of Galen's position on the role of the location of the tripartite soul in the context of the therapy of its passions and affections, and in relation with the theory of mixtures. The interaction between physiological enquiry and its ethical repercussions has shown the connection between the elementary composition of the body and the dependency of the soul, revealing the role of the physician in the restoration of εὐκρασία and its subsequent effect on the temperament of his patients. In fact, Galen draws from an assumption in *QAM* according to which the temperaments depend on the mixture of the body, and demonstrates the impact that medical action has in the determination of ethical and unethical behaviours, bringing the role of the doctor and that of the philosopher closer together. Galen's project of uniting medicine and philosophy was certainly ambitious and reflected the need for a rehabilitation of the medical art in a context that was resistant to considering it a science. The theory of mixtures provides him with an opportunity to prove the mutual influence of epistemology, physiology, and ethics, and to elevate the role of the physician not only as a practitioner of the ἰατρική τέχνη, but also as a main actor in the therapy of the soul.

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55 Cf *QAM* 4K815 (73 M). Engl. transl. Singer 2013: 405.

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CHAPTER 15

Selbstbewegung und Kreisbewegung. *Autokinēsis* in Plotin anhand der *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9]

Giovanni Panno

Abstract

In the *Enneads* the concept of self-movement appears in different places, but Plotinus does not examine it closely. He does not do so because of the possibility of attributing this activity – directly or not – to the *Hen* and to the *Nous*, as well as to the soul. Plotinus uses *autokinēsis* to describe the passage from the *Hen* to the *Nous*, that is the self-reflection of the *Nous*. At the same time, the way the soul turns around to the *Nous* belongs indirectly to the *autokinēsis*. Self-movement as "beholding of Being and activity" (Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 2, 18 [43], 5–8) is related to the whole process of flowing from the *Hen*, thus it also describes the activity of the *Hen*. In this way Plotinus points out a difference between Plato and Aristotle concerning the activity of the first principle. Aristotle refuses a self-movement for God, whereas for Plato (especially in *Laws* X) the *Nous* and the soul are self-moving first principles. Plotinus' solution has influenced medieval apophatic theology and provided an important basis for Novalis' first-romanticism as well as for Hegel's system.

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> Dem Geometer, der sich ganz vertieft, /Den Kreis zu messen, und, wie sehr er sinne, / Den Grundsatz dessen er bedarf nicht findet,/ War ich vergleichbar bei dem neuen Anblick./ Wie mit dem Kreise jenes Bild sich einigt, / Und wo sein Platz drin ist, wollt' ich erkennen;/ Doch nicht vermochten das die eignen Flügel./ Da wurde plötzlich, wie von einem Blitze, / Mein Geist durchzuckt und das Ersehnte kam./ Hier schwand die Kraft der hohen Phantasie; / Doch schon bewegte Willen und Verlangen / Mir, wie ein gleichbewegtes Rad, die Liebe,/ Die kreisen macht die Sonne wie die Sterne.
>
> Dante, *Paradies* 23: 133–145. Übers. K. Witte. Berlin: Askanischer V. 1916.

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1 Einführung*

«Das Denken der Bewegung hat die Bewegung an sich nicht hervorgebracht, sondern die Bewegung an sich das Denken (αὐτοκίνησις πεποίηκε τὴν νόησιν)».[1] Mit „Bewegung an sich" übersetzt H.F. Müller *autokinēsis,* das an lediglich zwei Stellen im ganzen *Corpus* der *Enneaden* zu finden ist, die in der vorliegenden Arbeit analysiert werden.[2] Nichtsdestotrotz verdient hier der Ausdruck Beachtung, und zwar nicht nur aus einer rein begriffsgeschichtlichen Sicht. *Selbstbewegung*, womit hier *autokinēsis* übersetzt werden soll, bietet sich vielmehr als ein sehr hilfreiches heuristisches Mittel an, um einige Knotenpunkte des plotinischen Systems zu vertiefen. In einem besonderen Fokus stehen dabei zum einen der Ausgang aus dem *Einen*, zum anderen die entsprechende einheitliche Selbstreflexion des *Nous*. Desweiteren hilft seine Fokussierung bei der Untersuchung nach der ‚besten Bewegung', die zur *homōiosis theōi* führt. Hierdurch soll der Weg zum wahren Selbst charakterisiert werden: Dazu ist der Begriff der Wendung miteinzubeziehen, mit der *Nous* und Einzelseelen zu ihrem wahren Ursprung zurückkehren. Überprüft wird also, ob diese komplexe Bewegung der *autokinēsis* entsprechen kann.

Für diese Untersuchung werde ich mich zweier platonischer Muster bedienen, welche von Plotin sowohl textuell als auch kontextuell aufgegriffen werden. Es handelt sich einerseits um die Wechselwirkung zwischen Passivität und Aktivität im *Sophistes*, andererseits um die Darstellung der perfekten Bewegung als Kreisbewegung.

Um diese letzte Bewegung charakterisieren zu können, werde ich ferner auf den Bewegungskatalog in Platons *Nomoi* bzw. auf die Selbstbewegung bei Platon *tout court* zurückgreifen. Dabei wird die Metapher der Kreisbewegung der *Enneade* 6, 9, 8 [9] problematisiert, welche den Bogen von einer zu beweisenden Selbstbewegung der Seele auf das *Eine* zurück spannt.

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1 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 6, 6 [34], 31–37. Plotins Enneaden werden hier mit meist geringen Änderungen auf der Basis der Übersetzungen Müllers (1878–1880) und Harders (1956) zitiert. Die Interpretation dieser Stelle wird später in Par. 2 wieder aufgenommen.

2 *Ibid.* und *Enn.* 6, 2, 18 [43], 5–8.

2 Eine Selbstbewegung im *Einen?*

Autokinēsis lässt sich als Substantiv zwar erst bei Plotin nachweisen,[3] wurde allerdings schon vor der *Physik* des Aristoteles, wo der Ausdruck zum ersten Mal als Adjektiv (οἷόν τέ τι αὐτοκίνητον)[4] auftaucht, in unterschiedlichen semantischen Variationen artikuliert. Vor allem bei Platon wird die Selbstbewegung mit einer ontologischen Priorität klar verbunden. An diversen Textstellen des *Phaidros* bedient sich Platon unterschiedlicher sinngemäßen Umschreibungen,[5] wobei die autonome Bewegung mit der Unsterblichkeit der Seele zusammenhängt. Die ontologische Priorität der Seele wird in *Nomoi* X wieder aufgenommen, wo die Hierarchie des Seins aus einer Hierarchie der Bewegungen hervorkommt (τὴν αὐτὴν ἑαυτὴν [...] κινοῦσαν).[6] Hierdurch wird die Selbstbewegung mit dem Ursprünglichen identifiziert.[7]

Bei Plotin ist allerdings diese Identifikation problematisch. Zwar weist er schon in der *Enn.* 4, 7, 9 [2] 5–8 der Seele eine autonome Bewegung zu (ἐξ ἑαυτῆς κινουμένη), ganz nach dem platonischen Muster von *Phaidros* und *Nomoi*, jedoch scheint diese Art von Selbstbewegung nicht mehr einer ontologischen Priorität zu entsprechen, die den anderen Instanzen zukommt.

Dies zeigt die erste hier zu analysierende Textstelle der *Enneaden*, wo der Ausdruck *autokinēsis* zu finden ist. Dort stellt Plotin folgende Überlegungen dar:

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3 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 2, 18 [43], 8 und 6, 6, 6 [34], 31. S. Opsomer 2012: 262–263, Mansfeld 2014, Oehlers 1997. Da ein vertiefender Gesamtüberblick über das Thema, welcher hier den Rahmen des Beitrages sprengen würde, derzeit noch fehlt, erlaube ich mir auf Panno 2016a hinzuweisen.

4 Aristoteles, *Phys.* 258 a1-4.

5 S. Plato, *Phaidr.* 245 c5-d7. Vgl. *Phaidr.* 245 d7: τὸ αὐτὸ αὑτὸ κινοῦν; *Phaidr.* 245 e3: τοῦ ὑφ'ἑαυτοῦ κινουμένου; oder τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινοῦν, *Phaidr.* 245 e8. Zwar ist in *Phaidr.* 245 c5 eine Textvariante zu finden, die für den Begriff auch den Ausdruck *autokinēsis* benutzt, diese ist allerdings möglicherweise von dem Einfluss des späten doxographischen Berichts Aëtios' über Thales oder Alkmaion beeinflusst: ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος. Τὸ γὰρ ἀεικίνητον [P.Oxy.: αὐτοκίνητον] ἀθάνατον. Dazu s. Mansfeld 2014: 2, Opsomer 2012: 261 und Horn 2005.

6 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 895 b3.

7 Ob und inwiefern diese Identifikation mit der Priorität vom *epekeina tēs ousias* oder mit der platonischen Protologie verträglich sein kann, wird später erneut erwähnt (*infra* Fn. 13). Hier sei nur darauf hingewiesen, dass die vorsokratische Idee der Selbstbewegung als *archē*, und zwar als *archē* der Seele, nach Platon als wichtiges Thema der Akademie weiterhin diskutiert wurde. Besonders interessant ist die Xenokrates zuzuschreibende pytagoreische Position der Seele als selbstbewegende Zahl (ἀριθμὸν κινοῦνθ' ἑαυτόν). Isnardi Parente F. 85:145.

> [a] Somit hat nicht das Denken der Bewegung die Selbstbewegung hervorgebracht, sondern die Selbstbewegung hat das Denken hervorgebracht (αὐτοκίνησις πεποίηκε τὴν νόησιν), dergestalt, dass sie sich selber als Bewegung und als Denken hervorbrachte.[8]
> [b] Denn die Bewegung dort oben ist zugleich auch das Denken Jenes Wesen. Jenes ist aber auch selber Bewegung, weil es die Erste Bewegung ist (denn es gibt keine andere vor ihr) und die wesenhafte Bewegung, weil sie nicht als Accidens an einem anderen ist, sondern die Verwirklichung des Bewegten, welches aktuell seiend ist (τοῦ κινουμένου ἐνέργεια ὄντος ἐνέργεια). Deshalb ist sie auch Wesenheit, während das nachfolgende Denken des Seienden von ihr verschieden ist.
> [c] Auch die Gerechtigkeit ist nicht Denken der Gerechtigkeit, sondern gleichsam ein Verhalten des Intellekts oder vielmehr eine Lebensenergie deren *Antlitz* in Wahrheit schön ist*, und weder Abendstern noch Morgenstern noch überhaupt.*
>
> PLOTINUS, *Enn.* 6, 6, 6 [34], 31–37[9]

Da jegliche Zuschreibung einer Bewegungsart der absoluten Einfachheit des *Einen* widerspricht,[10] muss die hier skizzierte Selbstbewegung nicht dem *Einen,* sondern vielmehr dem *Nous* zugeschrieben werden. Diesem – hält man sich an den ersten Satz [a] – kommt folglich nicht nur die Bewegung, sondern gleichzeitig auch das reflexive Moment des Denkens der Bewegung zu. Somit scheint Plotin durch die Zuschreibung der Selbstbewegung dem *Nous* eine Ursprünglichkeit nachzuweisen, die aber, mag es auch widersprüchlich erscheinen, dennoch ebenso auf das *Eine* zu beziehen ist. In der Tat würde die

8 Harder übersetzt mit «Bewegung an sich», und ähnlich übersetzen Faggin und Maggi, wie früher Cilento, mit «movimento in sé». Brisson übersetzt zwar hier *autokinēsis* mit «mouvement en soi», scheint aber den Gedanken einer Selbst-bewegung mit «l'acte d'une être en acte que se meut» am Ende vom [b] anzudeuten (τοῦ κινουμένου ἐνέργεια ὄντος ἐνέργεια). Slaveva-Griffin greift mit «absolute motion» Armstrongs Lösung wieder auf («absolute movement»). Damit geht sie dem hier zu unterstützenden Gedanken nach, dass der *Nous* die Ideen als Ideen hervorbringe, nicht als deren Abbilder. Der *Nous* ist nämlich die Wirklichkeit der Ideen als Denken und Gedachtes, wie später noch erörtert wird. Eine Diskussion des mittelplatonischen Beitrages wäre hier mit Sicherheit interessant, allerdings würde sie den Rahmen des Beitrages sprengen, vor allem aber würde dies der hier angestrebten Überprüfung der platonischen Vorlage nicht gerecht. Für die Rolle der Ideen *im Nous* s. zum Beispiel Alkinoos, *Didaskalikos* IX und X, in Vimercati 2015: 625–627.

9 Das Thema wird schon in Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 9, 3 und 8 [5] erarbeitet, sowie vor allem in *Enn.* 5, 9, 7 [5], wo Plotin auf die Bewegung *vor* dem Denken der Bewegung hinweist.

10 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 34: ἐκεῖνο μὲν οὖν μὴ ἔχον ἑτερότητα ἀεὶ πάρεστιν.

Behauptung «jenes ist aber auch selber Bewegung» offensichtlich der schon dargelegten Abwesenheit der Bewegung im *Einen* widersprechen, wenn wir unter „Jenes" (κἀκείνου νόησις) das *Eine* verstehen würden. Durch Hinzuziehen des letzten Teils, also mit dem dortigen Hinweis auf den Intellekt, sollte man schließlich diesen Verdacht abwehren: In [c] wird nämlich ausdrücklich auf die Identität von Denken und Gedachten, Bewegung und Bewegten hingewiesen, die dem *Nous* eigen ist. In dieser Hinsicht ist auch die Übersetzung von *autokinēsis* mit *Bewegung an sich* produktiv, da sie eine Deutung impliziert, gemäß welcher Plotin auf das *Nicht-Hintergehbarkeit* einer Idee der Bewegung hinweist.[11] Gleichzeitig verknüpft er die Idee der Bewegung mit der Bewegung selbst, so dass hier auch eine Kritik am aristotelischen unbewegten Beweger zu sehen ist.[12]

Diese Widersprüche ergeben sich zum Teil aus dem Deutungsversuch des platonischen Musters der *autokinēsis* als Bewegung der ersten ontologischen Instanz, wobei vom zehnten Buch der *Nomoi* ausgegangen wird. Eine solche Deutung findet dort Bestätigung: Jenseits des göttlichen selbstbewegenden *Nous* gäbe es nämlich kein weiteres Prinzip. Sobald wir aber die *Politeia* mit einbeziehen, wird es möglich, die Abwesenheit einer Bewegung im plotinischen *Einen* in Anlehnung an der platonischen Dimension des *epekeina tēs ousias* nachzuvollziehen.[13]

Eine Deutung, gemäß welcher das Eine als Hypostase eine Bewegung beinhaltet, widerspricht demnach der von Plotin oft betonten Transzendenz und wird von ihm explizit ausgeschlossen.[14]

Wenn sich das *Eine* zu sich hinwendet, befindet man sich schon in der zweiten Hypostase, wo das Herausfließen des *Einen* als *Nous* eingegrenzt wird, also in dem die *energeia* des *Einen* zu *Nous* geworden ist. Das Herausfließen aus dem *Einen* kann folglich als Bewegung betrachtet werden, allerdings eine Bewegung, die *aus dem Einen* heraus geht, ohne dass sich dieses bewegt oder seinen ontologischen Status mindert. Zweitens kann eine solche Bewegung erst im *Nous* reflektiert werden. Mit dem Herausfließen ist ein *primum* zu bedenken; allerdings kein chronologisches, denn es ist jenseits der Zeit: «Wenn

11 Für die Nicht-Hintergehbarkeit der Reflexion s. Schällibaum 2001: 54.

12 S. Maggi 2009: 199. Für die Auseinandersetzung Plotins mit dem Problem der Tätigkeit bei Aristoteles im Bezug auf den unbewegten Beweger s. schon De Corte 1935: 163 ff., Brisson 2008: 35 ff., Chiaradonna 2008, Maso et a. 2012. Für das Spannungsfeld zwischen Bewegung und Streben *qua energeia* s. Corcilius 2008: 270 (Fn. 33).

13 Plato, *Rep*. 6. 509 b9.

14 S. Plotinus, *Enn*. 5, 1, 6 [10], 15: «Da nun Jenes [das Eine] nichts hat zu dem es sich bewegen könnte, so dürfen wir nicht annehmen, daß es sich bewege (αὐτὸ κινεῖσθαι)». Der Wert des Seins des *Einen* ist qualitativ einer der höchsten Gattungen des *Sophistes* nicht gleich zu setzen, da dies das Sein übersteigt. S. Plotinus. *Enn*. 5, 4, 1 [7], 10.

etwas wurde, indem jenes sich bewegt, so würde das von jenem her nach der Bewegung Werdende als ein drittes und nicht als ein zweites werden».[15] Das *Eine* darf auch nicht als erstes *Moment* bezeichnet werden, weil es ansonsten in eine chronologische Abfolge gebracht werden würde und dadurch, selbst wenn es das erste in dieser Reihe wäre, seine absolute *autarkeia* einbüßen würde.

In seinem Zustand klingt eher eine Ruhe (*hesychia*) an, die mit einem Beziehen von Bewegung auf sich selbst nicht verträglich ist. Selbst der Begriff Ruhe, der wenngleich *ex-negativo* als eine ‚Abwesenheit von' angewendet wird, enthält eine Zuschreibung, die dem *Einen* fremd ist.[16] Dieser eigentliche Nicht-Zustand der Ruhe entspricht demjenigen der Seelen, die aus dem *Einen* herausgeflossen und somit entstanden sind, ihrem Ursprung nachstreben und, dort wieder angelangt, Rast machen (ἀναπαυόμενοι).[17] Dies bedeutet auch eine partielle Verschiebung des überlieferten platonischen Paradigmas der Gottesangleichung: Entsprach die Vervollkommnung der Seele gemäß dem Bild der *Nomoi* einer Nachahmung der perfekten Bewegung, also der Selbstbewegung, so findet jetzt die Seele in der Ruhe des *Einen* ihren anzustrebenden Ursprung.

3 Die *Autokinēsis* des *Nous*

3.1 *Die selbstbewegende* Epistēmē

Eine Dialektik der Ruhe und Bewegung, welche die Hypostasen durchdringt, spiegelt sich besonders im *Nous* wieder, der an die Ruhe des *Einen* grenzt. Diese *hesychia* ist nämlich sowohl Ursprung als auch Fluchtpunkt des *Nous*. Und was durch die Ruhe begrenzt wird, ist nach der Lehre des *Sophistes* notwendigerweise die Bewegung.

> […] die Bewegung entspringt nicht der Bewegung, noch geht sie in Bewegung über. Ferner besteht die Idee in der Ruhe als Begrenzung des *Nous*, der *Nous* aber ist ihre Bewegung, sodass alles eins ist, sowohl die Bewegung als auch die Ruhe.
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> PLOTINUS, *Enn.* 6, 2, 8 [43], 15

15 Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 1, 6 [10], 20.

16 Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 1, 6 [34], 13. Vgl. auch Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 3, 12 [49], 35. Für diese Frage im Mittelplatonismus vgl. zum Beispiel Asklepius XXXI, in Vimercati 2015: 927. Diesem gemäß sei Gott in der Lage, sich zu bewegen und gleichzeitig unbewegt zu bleiben. Für die Selbstbewegung von Gottes Geist in der Entwicklung des Neuplatonismus s. die Lösung Themistios' in Schramm 2013: 206.

17 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 22.

Plotin arbeitet hier mit der platonischen Vorlage, die nun kurz angesprochen werden soll, da sie als Grundlage der zu analysierenden *Enn.* 6, 2, 18 [43], 5–8 dient.[18] In dieser abschließenden Textstelle verwendet er den Ausdruck *autokinēsis*.

Gemäß dem platonischen Muster sind Sein, Bewegung und Ruhe voneinander abhängig, und konstituieren den ontologischen und logischen Stoff durch ihren Selbstbezug, wofür Identität und Differenz benötigt werden. Der *Nous* Plotins *denkt* diese Gattungen und dadurch werden diese unterschieden und zueinander in Bezug gesetzt.[19] Dabei folgt Plotin dem Mechanismus des *pantelōs on* im *Sophistes*: Gemeint ist das Sein im reichsten und eigentlichsten Sinne.[20] Durch das Verhältnis zwischen den Gattungen Sein, Bewegung und Ruhe entsteht also eine Dynamik der Aktivität und Passivität, wie diejenige, wonach die Ideen aufeinander bezogen werden, indem sie sich erkennen und erkannt werden.[21] Dies findet sowohl auf der Mikroebene der Intelligiblen statt, wo diese sich aufeinander beziehen, als auch auf der Makroebene des *Nous*, wo dieser sich auf sich selbst im (Selbst)denken bezieht.[22]

Die letzte Tätigkeit kann ihrerseits in zweifacher Weise als eine reflexive Bewegung gelesen werden: erstens als Bezug auf sich selbst; zweitens als Bezug auf den eigenen wahren Ursprung, nämlich auf das *Eine*.[23] Beide reflexive Bewegungen gehen von der dynamischen Relationalität im *Nous* sowie zwischen den Hypostasen aus und sind ferner von dem Begriff der Umkehrung abhängig, speziell von der „Sehrichtung“, wie es im folgenden Zitat angedeutet wird.

18 Eine analytische Lektüre dieser *Enneade* bietet Brisson 1991, insbesondere s. S. 472, sowie Brisson 2008: 47–48 und 54–56. Zur plotinischen Lektüre des *Sophistes* s. auch die früheren Anmerkungen Verras 1963: 35 ff. sowie diejenigen von Halfwassen 2004, 68 , Lavaud 2008: 153 und Perls 2014. Hier kann keine ausführliche Parallele zwischen dem *Sophistes* und der *Enn.* 6, 2, 8 [43] angeboten werden. Vielmehr wird der Akzent auf die spezifische Hypothese gelegt, wonach mit der *Selbstbewegung* auf eine besondere Wechselwirkung der höchsten Gattungen (und der Ideen) in *pantelōs on* hingewiesen werden kann, also auf eine *spezifische* Art der Bewegung und Tätigkeit.

19 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 2, 7 [43], 5–15. Vgl. Plato, *Soph.* 249 a9.

20 Plato, *Soph.* 248 d-e. Über den *pantelōs on* s. Fronterotta 2001: 360 ff., Karfik 2011, Panno 2016b. Über den Begriff des Lebens im *pantelōs on* s. Lo Casto 2013: 77.

21 Vgl. Fronterotta 2001: 364. Die Idee eines absoluten Denkens in der Wechselwirkung der Ideen zeigt Fink 2007.

22 Vgl. Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 6, 6 [24], 20 und 5, 6, 1 [24], 10, respektive für die Idee der Vielfalt des *Nous* und seiner Einfachheit/Nicht Einfachheit. Vgl. auch Aubry 2009: 236.

23 Vgl. Schällibaum 2001: 46. Über die Reflexion innerhalb der *noēsis* (jedoch ohne Einbezug der Kategorie der Selbstbewegung) s. auch Lavaud 2008: 171 und 191 ff. Vor allem besticht das Werk Lavauds für die äußerst produktive Analyse der Kategorie der Andersheit durch den Filter Levinás.

> [e] Hinsichtlich des Schönen ließe sich, wenn jenes die erste Schönheit ist, dasselbe und ähnliches sagen wie über das Gute; und wenn es das an der Idee gleichsam Hervorstrahlende ist [ἐπιστίλβον], so läßt sich einwenden, daß dies nicht in allen Dingen dasselbe und daß das hinzukommende Hervorstrahlen etwas späteres ist [ὕστερον τὸ ἐπιστίλβειν].
> [f] Wenn aber das Schöne nichts anderes ist als die Seinsheit selbst, so ist es in der Seinsheit. Wenn es aber darin besteht, daß es auf uns, die Sehenden, eine solche Affektion [πάθος] verursacht, so ist dieses Tätig-sein eine Bewegung; und wenn die Tätigkeit auf jenes hinführt [πρὸς ἐκεῖνο ἡ ἐνέργεια], so ist es Bewegung.
> [g] *Auch* die Wissenschaft ist eine *Selbstbewegung* als ein Schauen des Seienden und Tätigkeit [ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ ἐπιστήμη αὐτοκίνησις ὄψις οὖσα τοῦ ὄντος καὶ ἐνέργεια],[24] aber nicht ein Zustand [ἕξις]; folglich gehört sie gleichfalls unter die Bewegung oder, wenn man will, unter die Ruhe oder auch unter beide; wenn unter beide, als etwas Gemischtes; wenn das, so ist das Gemischte ein Späteres.
> [h] Der *Nous* aber als ein denkendes Seiende und ein aus allem Zusammengesetztes [σύνθετον] ist nicht eine der Gattungen; und der wahre *Nous* ist ein mit allem verbundenes Seiende und in Wahrheit alles Seiende, das bloße nackte Seiende aber ist, zur Gattung gezogen, ein Element desselben.
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> PLOTINUS, *Enn.* 6, 2, 18 [43], 5–8

Autokinēsis ist grundsätzlich im Wissen inbegriffen und zwar als Schau des Seins, das im Textbeispiel [f] mit dem Schönen identifiziert wird. Diese Bemerkung ist jedoch nicht der eigentliche Mittelpunkt des Zitats. Vielmehr geht es um die zu erläuternde Gleichung *epistēmē=autokinēsis* [g], die einen wichtigen Verweis auf die Struktur der Bewegung selbst enthält, das heißt auf ein ihr innewohnendes Element der Passivität (πάθος) [f]. Die Gleichsetzung von *epistēmē* und *autokinēsis* stellt eine wichtige Verknüpfung mit der oben erwähnten Begrifflichkeit der *dynamis tou poiein kai pathein* dar und bereitet den später zu erarbeitenden Begriff der Wendung (ἐπιστροφῇ) vor.

Gemäß [f] wird eine hier nicht näher erklärte Affektion verursacht, die in uns geschieht. Allerdings ist die Prozesshaftigkeit des Herausfließens an

24 Dies ist auch die Lösung Armstrongs («self-movement»), während Cilento, wie später Faggin, die Spontaneität («moto spontaneo») betonen, Harder die Selbstständigkeit der Bewegung («Eigenbewegung»). Brisson bevorzugt hier «mouvement que se meut lui-même».

sich auf nichts gerichtet, da dem *Einen* kein teleologisches Merkmal zugeschrieben werden kann. Gleichwohl ist das *Eine immer* auf den *Nous* und auf die Einzelseelen gerichtet, welche das Herausfließen jeweils unterschiedlich eingrenzen und aufnehmen, beziehungsweise von diesem bestimmt werden. Was die Seelen anbelangt, wird anhand der *Enneade* 6, 9, 8 [9] ersichtlich, dass das Problem der Selbstbewegung als Schau des Seins in den Sehenden liegt, beziehungsweise in ihrer Bereitschaft, sich dem *Einen* hinzu zu wenden. Obwohl Plotin den Ausdruck *autokinēsis* den Seelen nicht direkt zuschreibt, wird die oben erwähnte Hinwendung der Seelen aufgrund ihrer theoretischen Affinität zur Bewegung anhand der Begrifflichkeit der Selbstbewegung untersucht.

Richten wir unsere Aufmerksamkeit nun auf Abschnitt [g]. Dort könnte man in Erwägung ziehen, das Wort „kai" mit „auch" zu übersetzen. Gemäß einer solchen Lesart kann die *epistēmē*, die im Intellekt angesiedelt ist, *auch* auf die vorige Bewegung, nämlich derjenigen der Seelen, angewendet werden. Das Subjekt, das im vorigen Satz vorkommt, sind in der Tat die Sehenden, also die Menschen. Setzt man diese Deutung fort, wird es möglich, den Sehenden eine Selbstbewegung zuzuschreiben.

Um diese Lesart von Passage [g] bestätigen zu können, müssen wir den Anfang des Zitats wieder miteinbeziehen.

Dem Hervorstrahlen des Schönen, das mit dem Guten gleichgesetzt ist, kann keine Priorität zugewiesen werden, denn das Hervorstrahlen als Manifestation der Idee folgt ihr logischerweise und kann ihr aber auch nicht ausschöpfend gerecht werden. Daher repräsentieren nicht alle resultierenden Seienden das gleiche, weil die Idee durch das Hervorstrahlen zu dem, was nicht intelligibel ist, vermittelt wird und zwar notwendigerweise mit einer Minderung seiner ontologischen Fülle. Plotin beschreibt nun in gewisser Weise eine vermeintliche Klimax der Bewegung, wobei die Effekte des Schönen im eigentlichen Sinne, also als Seinsheit, auf den *Nous* und dann auf uns wirken.

Fraglich ist gewiss, welche Instanz hier das Subjekt dieses Tätig-seins ist. Doch lohnt es sich vielmehr Folgendes zu betonen: Der *Nous*, dessen Tätigkeit *auf uns* und *auf es* gerichtet ist, wird als *kinēsis* bezeichnet.[25]

Die *epistēmē* ist also eine Selbstbewegung, wobei sich der *Nous* durch die Tätigkeit des Schauens erkennt. *Epistēmē* weist in den *Enneaden* sowohl auf seine Bedeutung als Wissenschaft, welche der *doxa* entgegengestellt wird,[26] als auch auf einen für den *Nous* eigentümlichen Wert. Die *epistēmē* im *Nous*

25 Siehe dazu Chiaradonna 2008.
26 Vgl. ἐπιστήμῃ περὶ πάντων, οὐ δόξῃ, *Enn.* 1, 3, 4 [20], 5 e *Enn.* 6, 4, 20 [22].

ist von dem «sich selbst Denken» (κατανόησιν ἑαυτοῦ)[27] abhängig, d. h. dass die Wissenschaft keinen Sinn ergeben würde, wenn der *Nous* nicht über die Fähigkeit verfügen würde, sich zu erkennen. Nun trägt die *epistēmē* des *Nous* aber die Merkmale einer universellen Wissenschaft, die *potentiell* alle Wissenschaften sein kann und *aktuell* als Wissenschaft vom Selbst des *Nous* eine Tätigkeit darstellt. Dadurch wird ebenso die Bedeutung des kleinen Zusatzes am Ende von [g] ersichtlich: «*Auch* die Wissenschaft ist eine *Selbstbewegung* als ein Schauen des Seienden und eine Tätigkeit, aber nicht ein Zustand [ἕξις]». Hier erweist sich die *epistēmē* also als Tätigkeit, in der Reflexion des *Nous* als Schauenden zu sich selbst als Seienden stattfindet. Dies geschieht einerseits durch den Bezug der in ihm tätigen Wissenschaften,[28] beziehungsweise durch den Selbstbezug der Intelligiblen und ihrer Einheit in der Differenz. Andererseits gilt der Hinweis auf die bestimmte Affektion (πάθος), welche die Schauenden ergreift, auch für den *Nous qua* Schauender. Um die mögliche Reichweite des Impliziten des Ausdruckes *autokinēsis* auszuschöpfen, soll daher die Möglichkeit einer Art Veränderung überprüft werden, die mit der Affektion zusammenhängt, da sie die *energeia* in Bewegung, beziehungsweise Selbstbewegung verwandelt. In dieser Hinsicht ist es sinnvoll, auf ein wichtiges Merkmal der platonischen *autokinēsis* zurückzugreifen, nämlich auf den Begriff der *metabolē.*

3.2 *Eine* **metabolē** *in der Kreisbewegung? Die platonische Vorlage in Plotin.*

Die Einführung der platonischen Vorlage soll nicht nur dazu dienen, den begriffsgeschichtlichen Referenzpunkt Plotins vorzustellen. Vielmehr soll hierdurch jene Darstellung der (Selbst)bewegung aufgerufen werden, die Plotin fortentwickeln muss, um dem Element der Selbstständigkeit *innerhalb* des Systems gerecht zu werden.

Die kreisförmige Bewegung und ihre ontologischen Implikationen werden sowohl in *Timaios,* insbesondere mit dem Bild der Kreise des Identischen und Anderen, als auch im zehnten Buch der *Nomoi* erläutert.[29] In diesem Werk wird explizit der Bezug der Kreisbewegung auf die Seele und die Selbstbewegung erstellt, daher werden wir uns nun mit den entsprechenden Stellen beschäftigen.

27 Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 3, 1 [49], 10–15.

28 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 2, 20 [43], 1–10.

29 Plato, *Tim.* 36 c-37 d. Über die Kreis-, *Nous*- und Selbstbewegung s. die unverzichtbare Arbeit von Karfik 2004: 184 ff.

Der Fremde aus Athen, die Hauptperson der *Nomoi*, listet die zehn wichtigsten Bewegungen auf, wobei dem Wesen, das nicht nur von anderen bewegt wird, sondern sich selbst bewegt, die ontologische Priorität zukommt. Die zwei Argumente – Bewegung und Priorität des Seins – sind voneinander abhängig und können hier nur kurz berührt werden. Hinsichtlich der Auseinandersetzung mit der Selbstbewegung gilt es die Absicht zu erwähnen, einen *regressus ad infinitum* der Bewegung zu vermeiden,[30] daher soll die «sich selbst bewegende Bewegung (τὴν αὑτὴν ἑαυτὴν κινοῦσαν)» die erste sein.[31] Doch weitaus stärker sticht ein anderes theoretisches Merkmal hervor, nämlich dasjenige der Veränderung (πρεσβυτάτην καὶ κρατίστατην μεταβολῶν πασῶν).[32]

Die Instanz, welcher die sich selbst bewegende Bewegung zusteht, wird bekanntlich mit der Seele identifiziert:[33] zum einen aufgrund ihrer chronologischen Priorität gegenüber dem Körper; zum anderen aufgrund der damit verbundenen Überlegenheit ihrer Produkte («Wesenszüge, Charaktereigenschaften, Wünsche, Überlegungen, wahre Meinungen, Fürsorge und Erinnerungen», *Leg.* 896 d). Somit vervollkommnet Plato eine interessante Umkehrung von *technē* und *physis* – ein *hysteron-proteron*, wobei die technischen Produkte, die aus der Seele stammen, *natürlicher* als diejenige des physischen Körpers sind. Die *technē* der Seele ist also eine *technē* der Natur: Radikalisiert man die Folgen dieser Argumentation, findet man in der *metabolē* der Seele eine natürliche Veränderung, welche die hier ausgelegte ontologische Bedeutung der Selbstbewegung umso mehr aufwertet.[34]

Der Schritt zur Zuschreibung einer solchen Tätigkeit an das göttliche *Nous* ist sehr kurz, sodass man fast den Eindruck gewinnen könnte, es biete sich eine direkte Verschiebung von der Seele auf den *Nous* an.[35] Kompositorisch leitet diese Stelle aus *Nomoi* X unmittelbar zum Bild der Drechselbank über,

30 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 894 e2.

31 S. auch Plato, *Leg.* 10. 896 a: τὴν δυναμένην αὑτὴν αὑτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν.

32 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 895 a-c. S. auch Plato, *Leg.* 10. 894 a5-8. «Indem es also so umschlägt und sich verändert, wird alles; es ist wirklich seiend (μεταβάλλον μὲν οὖν οὕτω καὶ μετακινούμενον γίγνεται πᾶν), solange es bestehen bleibt, wenn es aber in eine andere Beschaffenheit umgeschlagen ist, ist es vollständig vernichtet (μεταβαλὸν δὲ εἰς ἄλλην ἕξιν διέφθαρται παντελῶς)». Für eine spezifische Analyse des X. Buches der *Nomoi* vgl. Steiner 1992.

33 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 896 a-b.

34 Vgl. Plato, *Leg.* 10. 904 c6-9. «So verändern sich nun alle Wesen (μεταβάλλει), die einer Seele teilhaftig sind, da sie ja in sich selbst den Grund dieser Veränderung tragen (ἐν ἑαυτοῖς κεκτημένα τὴν τῆς μεταβολῆς αἰτίαν), und bei dieser Veränderung wechseln sie ihren Ort gemäß der Ordnung und dem Gesetz des Schicksals». Dazu s. Demos 1968: 137. S. Gaiser 1968: 176.

35 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 897 d-e.

wodurch es Platon möglich ist, die Ursprünglichkeit des *Nous* und die Perfektion seiner Kreisbewegung zu beschreiben. Auf dem ersten Blick scheint eine solche Einbettung in Platon von der nicht veränderbaren Ordnung der Stadt abhängig zu sein.

In der Ökonomie des Werkes dient die Feststellung einer vernünftigen Ordnung des Weltalls sowie die Identifikation des Göttlichen mit der Vernunft dem Ziel einer politischen und gesellschaftlichen und damit nicht zuletzt einer psychologischen Ordnung. Selbstbewegung in der letzten Stadt Platons bedeutet eine Nachahmung dessen, was selbstbewegend ist, nämlich des göttlichen *Nous*, und eine Pflege dessen, was ihm am meisten ähnelt, der (rationellen) Seele. Dies soll innerhalb des Zusammenhanges der Stadt (*auch* durch das *ta hautou prattein*) erfolgen.[36]

Der Athener verweist nun auf die Notwendigkeit, sich eines Gleichnisses zu bedienen, in diesem Fall desjenigen der Drechselbank, wonach die Bewegungen um den Mittelpunkt eine größte Ähnlichkeit mit dem Umschwung der Vernunft haben.[37] Die Kreisbewegung kehrt nämlich immer zum gleichen Punkt zurück und lässt somit trotz der Bewegung keine Änderung zu.[38] Dies entspricht dem Charakter des Rituals der Stadt, d.h. den möglichst wenigen Erneuerungen in ihrem Alltag sowie in ihrer Gesetzgebung.

Darunter scheint allerdings gerade jener Begriff der *metabolē* zu leiden, welcher maßgeblich dazu beiträgt, die Priorität des *Nous* beziehungsweise der Seele zu charakterisieren. Einerseits sei also der *Nous* der Veränderung fähig, andererseits sollte seine Bewegung durch eine immer gleiche Kreisbewegung veranschaulicht werden. Dies scheint im Übrigen ein weiteres Problem zu beinhalten, nämlich die Unmöglichkeit, sich von einem bestimmten Kreis innerhalb des Systems zu einem nächsten Kreis zu bewegen, also dem Zentrum der Bewegung näher zu kommen und somit den *Nous* besser nachzuahmen. Dieses Problems scheint sich der Athener bewusst zu sein, als er die Unterschiede zwischen der Geschwindigkeit der Kreise um das Zentrum zwar als harmonisch beschreibt, jedoch er diese Harmonie einen merkwürdigen Zustand nennt (fast eine Affektion des Systems, πάθος).[39]

36 Darüber s. Panno 2007b, Peponi 2013, Prauscello 2016. Obgleich dieser politische Bezug bei Plotin fehlt, sind die Einzelseelen nicht minder in einem (hier ontologischen) System integriert. Für das Projekt von Platonopolis s. O'Meara 2003.

37 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 898 a-b3; *Leg.* 10. 897 d-e; vgl. *Rep.* 7. 516 e-517 a.

38 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 898 a-b3. Vgl. *Rep.* 4. 436 b6-e4.

39 Plato, *Leg.* 10. 893 d-e. Vgl. *Leg.* 10. 893 d4: «Daher ist sie auch zur Quelle alles Wunderbaren geworden, weil sie zu gleicher Zeit großen und kleinen Kreisen Langsamkeit und Schnelligkeit in harmonischen Verhältnis verleiht, ein Zustand [πάθος], den man eigentlich

Die Metapher der Kreisbewegung wird von Plotin mehrmals aufgegriffen, insbesondere in *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], wo es sich allerdings vielmehr um das Verhältnis zwischen Seelen und *Einem* als um die Bewegung des *Nous* handelt. Dieses wird hier später analysiert; hier gilt es zunächst eine mögliche Deutung der Selbstbewegung im *Nous* als Antwort auf die oben geschilderte platonische Schwierigkeit zu unternehmen.

Eine *metabolē* des *Nous* könnte im Sinne der *epistrophē* verstanden werden, wodurch sich der *Nous* zu sich selbst, und somit seinem wahren Ursprung, also dem *Einen* hinwendet.[40]

Diese Hinwendung zum Ursprung setzt eine dynamische Relationalität zwischen den Hypostasen voraus, sodass die Blickrichtung seitens der Weltseele oder der einzelnen Seelen zum *Nous* derjenigen des *Nous* zum *Einen* entspricht.[41] Dadurch, dass das Ursprünglichste für die Seele im *Nous* und für den *Nous* im *Einen* ist, stellt sich die Hinwendung zum *Nous* wie eine Rückkehr zum wahren Selbst dar, und dies ist somit auch diejenige Tätigkeit, die dem Ursprung am nächsten kommt. Bei diesen Überlegungen folgt Plotin offensichtlich dem Duktus der platonischen Argumentation hinsichtlich des *hysteron-proteron*. Allerdings sieht er auch wie diese *epistrophē* des *Nous* ein Bewusstsein impliziert, welches die Bewegung zurück zum *Einen* faktisch begleitet, obgleich dieses zumindest apperzeptive Bewusstsein logisch vorausgehen sollte.

Auch weist das Selbstbewusstsein auf eine Wechselwirkung zwischen Aktivität und Passivität hin, welche an die Dynamik des *pantelōs on* des *Sophistes* erinnert.[42] In der Tat kommt dem oben erwähnten *pathos*,[43] welches der Schau des Seins vorausgeht, noch ein zweites Merkmal der Passivität im *Nous* zu, nämlich die *rezeptive* Intuition (ἐπιβολῇ [...] παραδοχῇ), die bei der Schau des Seins ebenfalls vorausgesetzt ist (ἐπέκεινα αὐτοῦ, Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 7, 35 [18], 22).

Unter *epistrephein* versteht man also einerseits den Akt, in dem die Hinwendung zu sich eine Selbstunterscheidung hervorruft, wodurch sich das

für unmöglich hält». S. auch Leg. 894 a1: «Wann entsteht nun aber die Entstehung eines jeglichen Dinges. Welches Ereignis [πάθος] muß hierzu eintreten?» (Übersetzung nach Schöpsdau 1977). Dazu vgl. auch Plato, *Tim.* 47 b-c.

40 Vgl. Halfwassen 1994: 16, Beierwaltes 2001: 103 ff., Halfwassen 2004: 90 ff.

41 Plotinus, *Enn.* 4, 8, 4 [6], 1–5. Vgl. den Begriff der *dynamische Identität* bei Beierwaltes 1991: 176 ff.

42 Vgl. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 1, 22 [42], 10–19. Vgl. Halfwassen 2004: 69.

43 *Supra* par. 2.1; Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 2, 18 [43], 5–8.

Denken gegenüber dem *Einen* eingrenzt. Andererseits aber muss der *Nous* eine Intuition von sich als *eins* mit dem über ihn liegenden *Hen* haben (*ibid.*).

Wenn wir allerdings mit *autokinēsis* die Fähigkeit verbinden, den Weg zum wahren *autos* zu schlagen, dann ist sie nicht mehr als Prärogative des *Nous* zu betrachtet:[44] Die Hinwendung zur eigenen Innerlichkeit gehört dem klassischen Thema des plotinischen Weges der Seelen zur *homoiōsis theōi* an.[45] Wenn der Begriff der Selbstbewegung die beste Tätigkeit beschreiben soll, dann sollte sie jener Rückkehr zum Ursprung des wahren Selbst entsprechen, die eine Angleichung an Gott erlaubt.[46] Eine Untersuchung der Seelenbewegung in diesem Hinblick ist von der Auseinandersetzung Plotins mit den Kreisbewegungen in der *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9] angeboten.

4 Eine *epistrophē* der Seele in der Kreisbewegung? Die *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9]

4.1 *Die Kreisbewegung um das Göttliche*

«Warum bewegt sich der Himmel kreisförmig? Weil er den *Nous* nachahmt» (*Enn.* 2, 2, 1 [14], 1). Die Frage der Kreisbewegung ist im ganzen chronologischen Bogen der *Enneaden* zu finden. Zunächst zwei gute Gründe für diese Art der Bewegung:

Sie beschreibt sowohl die Autarkie des Weltalls als auch die Symphonie zwischen den Seelen und der Ordnung des Weltalls selbst.[47] In einem astronomischen und psychagogischen System drückt die Kreisförmigkeit periodische

44 Vgl. Halfwassen 2004: 46 ff.

45 Für die damit verbundenen ontologisch unentbehrlichen Prozesse des Selbstwissens, wie Bewusstsein und Selbstbewusstsein, und die Definition des „Selbst" s. das Werk Beierwaltes' 2001; für die «self-transparent self-intellection» insbesondere s. erneut Remes 2007: 160. Dazu s. auch Halfwassen 1994, 19 ff.

46 S. den schönen Beitrag von Männlein-Robert 2013, insbesondere die S. 105 ff., für eine Betrachtung der *homoiōsis theōi* in der Kaiserzeit und insbesondere im Bezug auf die *theoi andres* mit den damit verbundenen Begriffen von Tugend und Ekstase. Remes 2007 vertieft das Thema der Ent-grenzung des Selbst (S. 245 ff.) ohne allerdings die «godlikeness» zu fokussieren (eine Erwähnung findet auf S. 218 statt). Hingegen sieht Ousager 2004: 53, die «unification with the One» als notwendiger Ausgang des Weges zur wahren «selfhood». Anhand der Kreis – und Sphärenmetaphorik werden im vorliegenden Beitrag jedoch jene monistischen Merkmale des Weges zur *homoiōsis* akzentuiert, die Ousager (Fn. 70,59) ablehnt.

47 Plotinus, *Enn.* 4, 3, 12 [27], 14–25.

Bewegungen aus,[48] wobei Makro- und Mikrokosmos kommunizieren. In dieser Hinsicht beschreibt auch die Rückkehr der Seele zum *Einen* nach ihrem Hinabstieg (beziehungsweise eines Teils von ihr) die Figur eines zu sich kehrenden Bogens, also eines Kreises.

Die Kreisbewegung der Weltseele stellt eine Tätigkeit des Bewusstseins (συναισθητικὴ), der Reflexion (συννοητικὴ) und des Lebens (ζωτικὴ), dar, welche zu sich selbst zurückkehrt und alles miteinbeziehen soll.[49] Auch den Einzelseelen würde es so ergehen, wenn sie nicht von Körpern gehindert wären, die ihrerseits einer geraden Bewegung teilhaftig sind. Desweiteren ist es ein Problem des in uns befindlichen *sphärischen* Elements (σφαιροειδές), welches nicht gut abgerundet ist (εὔτροχον), dass wir das andere Element, das himmlische, sehr leicht und höchst beweglich (εὐκίνητον), in der Kreisbewegung hindern.[50] Es handelt sich dabei in der Tat um eine natürliche, *notwendige* Bewegung um Gott (*Enn.* 2, 2, 2 [14], 25).

In der *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9] taucht der Ausdruck *autokinēsis* nicht auf, jedoch handelt der Text von einer *epistrophē* der Seele, welche sich zum *Einen* hinwenden soll. Innerhalb einer Kreisbewegung also, wo die Seele um das *Eine* als um ihr Mittelpunkt kreist, ist eine weitere Qualität der Bewegung möglich, wodurch sich die Seele zu ihrem Ursprung *hinwendet*. Diese Bewegung findet in einem besonderen ontologischen Kontext statt, wofür sich Plotin auch einer neuen Veranschaulichung bedient. Hier ergänzt und vollendet die Metapher der Sphäre das platonische Bild der Kreisbewegung. Dabei findet das oben angesprochene, sphärische Element der Seele eine makrokosmische Entsprechung in dem Ganzen.

Die Aufgabe der Seele besteht darin, sich dorthin zu bewegen, woher sie herkommt.[51] Der Mensch, der dieser natürlichen, den Göttern ähnlichen, Bewegung nicht nachgeht, ist ein tierischer oder vielgestaltiger Mensch (ἄνθρωπος ὁ πολὺς).[52] Dieser Hinweis lässt nicht nur einen platonischen *Topos* anklingen,[53] sondern vielmehr den (bekannten) kathartischen Weg, entlang dessen der Mensch die Materialität verlassen soll, um zurück zur *archaia physis* zu kommen. Innerhalb der Kreisbewegung, i.e. der natürlichen Bewegung

48 Plotinus, *Enn.* 2, 2, 1 [14], 5.

49 Plotinus, *Enn.* 2, 2, 1 [14], 10–18.

50 Mit *eukinēton* könnte die Stelle des *Phaidros* anklingen, wobei Aëthios ἀεικίνητον ἢ αὐτοκίνητον verwendet. Ein ähnlicher Ausdruck (εὐκινητότατον) wird von Aristoteles in Bezug auf die Atomisten erwähnt. Aristoteles, *An.* 405 a11; Kirk-Raven-Schofield: 465.

51 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 1–10.

52 *Ibid.*

53 Vgl. Plato, *Rep.* 3. 397 e1-2: «Bei uns gibt es keinen zweigestaltigen oder vielgestaltigen Menschen, da jeder nur eines verrichtet» (Übersetzung Schleiermacher).

der Seelen, können zwar Brüche entstehen (κλάσιν), welche die Einflüsse der Sensibilität repräsentieren und eine gerade Bewegung verursachen. Allerdings wird eine Seele, die *sich* allezeit kennt (οἶδεν ἑαυτὴν), sowohl eine notwendige (ἐχρῆν) Bewegung um das Zentrum, da dieses ihr Ursprung ist, als auch eine Bewegung *zum dem Zentrum hin* vollziehen.[54] Daher finden hier das bekannte Bild des *Phaidros*[55] sowie die Kreisbewegung des zehnten Buches der *Nomoi* eine systematische Erklärung und gleichzeitig eine Vertiefung. Zentrum und Kreise sind verknüpft, was die Kreisbewegung darstellen kann,[56] allerdings erklärt die daraus resultierende geometrische Figur nicht das Streben *zum* Zentrum, wodurch die Seelen den Göttern ähneln können. Die Anerkennung der Abhängigkeit vom Zentrum verleitet die Seele dazu, sich in seine Richtung zu bewegen, um in einer *Gemeinschaft* mit ihm zu sein.[57] In dieser Bewegung gibt es also eine Autonomie (συνφέρουσα ἑαυτὴν) innerhalb der Notwendigkeit, wobei sich die Seele in die Herrschaft des *Einen* begeben soll (συνημμένον).[58]

Zur Interpretation dieser Stelle dient der Hinweis, dass die Kreise um das Zentrum selbst ‚zentriform' werden (κεντροειδής),[59] womit das Prinzip der Nachahmung aufgegriffen wird, welches zur *homoiōsis* leitet. Die Linien, die in «*einen* Mittelpunkt zusammenlaufen» sind diesem ähnlich – weil sie aus diesem entsprungen sind. Aus dem Herausfließen aus dem *Einen* sind Spuren verblieben, die die Seele interpretieren soll (ἴχνη).[60] Damit ist die Selbsterkenntnis als Kenntnis des eigenen Ursprunges gemeint. Die hier besprochenen Elemente zeigen allerdings auch die Unzulänglichkeit der geometrischen Metapher der Kreise auf.

4.2 *Von der Kreisbewegung zur Sphäre: Die* archaia physis *um die Seele*

Die *archaia physis* ist, im Gegensatz zur Materialität (χωρισθεῖσαι ὅλαι),[61] der Ort, wo das eigene Zentrum mit dem Zentrum des Ganzen zusammenfällt. Überall ist diese seelische Natur anwesend, wie in einer Pflanze, selbst in

54 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 7–8.

55 Plato, *Phaidr*. 248 b-c.

56 S. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 3, 12 [27], 20–25: «Ihr Leben (τύχας) und ihre Entschlüsse (προαιρέσεις) werden bezeichnet (σημαίνεσθαι) durch die Stellungen der Gestirne (σχήμασι), daß [die Sphären] gleichsam *einen* harmonischen Klang (μίαν φωνὴν) vernehmen lassen und daß man dies vorzugsweise nach Analogie der Musik und Harmonie gedeutet hat».

57 Harder übersetzt «sich in die Gemeinschaft […] begeben».

58 Plotinus, *Enn.* VI 9, 8 [9], 7–10. Faggin übersetzt «è dio soltanto avvinto a Lui»; Harder: «Gott ist das, was mit Jenem verbunden ist». Vergleiche auch *synēmmenos* in *Enn.* 4, 4, 14 [22], 18–20.

59 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 8, 18 [39], 10.

60 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 8, 18 [39], 15–20.

61 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 15–17.

einem abgeschnittenen Pflanzenstück, denn «eine ist die Natur des Alls».[62] Dies bricht das Prinzip der Zweidimensionalität ab und zwingt zu einer dreidimensionalen Darstellung, das heißt zur Sphäre:[63] Die ursprüngliche Natur ist nicht nur *in* der Seele, sondern auch *um* die Seele herum.[64] Somit ereignet sich der Prozess der Rückkehr nicht auf einer Vertikalebene, welche sowohl vom platonisch geprägten Gleichnis der Pflanze («himmlische Wurzeln» der Seele)[65] als auch von einer hierarchischen Struktur der Folgen *Hen-Nous*-Weltseele-Einzelseelen angedeutet werden könnte. Die Bewegung der Kreise lässt vielmehr alle ihre Zentren in einem Zentrum zusammenfallen, als ob sie in diesem aufgelöst würden, so dass die Bewegung ihre Zielsetzung in der Ruhe hat.[66] In der Tat langen *wir* als Seele dort an, wo die Bewegung anfängt und gleichzeitig beenden soll, weil es dort eben keine Bewegung geben kann (ἀναπαυόμενοι).[67] Dies ist allenfalls möglich, weil die Seele das Element des Intelligiblen schon *ab initio*, und zwar ontologisch, teilt. Die Rast am Ende des Weges zum *Einen*, hier zunächst als katartische Befreiung von der Andersheit, unter anderen des Körpers zu verstehen, könnte zunächst auf eine Identifikation des Denkenden mit dem Gedachten hinauslaufen.[68] Allerdings geschieht dieser Kontakt «mit anderen Kräfte», welche eine Verwandtschaft (συγγενεῖ) nachweisen, die Identität und Gleichheit ermöglicht (ὁμοιότητι καὶ ταὐτότητι).[69]

Der Wortschatz Plotins bedient sich der Mittel, die später als Muster der mittelalterlichen Mystik gelten: Der Kontakt zwischen Seelen und *Einem* geschieht durch Aussonderung jedwelcher Materie, die als Andersheit gilt, somit

62 Plotinus, *Enn.* 4, 3, 8 [27], 45.

63 Zwar benutzt Plotin den Ausdruck Sphäre auch für eine neutrale Zuweisung eines spezifischen Teil des Körpers («Mittelpunkt der Sphäre für den menschlichen Körper», *Enn.* 2, 2, 2 [14], 10–15), aber dabei überwiegt die Verwendung des Ausdruckes für die Beschreibung eines spezifischen ontologischen Bereiches («intelligible Sphäre», *Enn.* 6, 5, 10 [23] 40–45), oder gerade des Bereiches, welcher als wahres Leben alles umgibt (*Enn.* 6, 5, 9 [23], 8–13). Hier zeigt sich die Affinität des *pantelōs on* in *Sophistes* mit der Sphäre Plotins. Ausgehend vom ontologischen Wert der sphärischen Form wird es verständlich, weshalb diese Form eine bessere Beweglichkeit der Seele gewährt (εὐκίνητον, *Enn.* 2, 2, 2 [14], 18–20). S. Chiaradonna 2012. Die platonische Vorlage des *Timaios'* spielt auch hier eine wichtige Rolle: S. Plato, *Tim.* 62 c-63 a4.

64 Sie ist anerkennbar, sobald sich die Seele von der Gemeinschaft mit dem Körper distanziert (*to synamphoteron*). Vgl. Reuter 1994: 90.

65 Plato, *Tim.* 90 a8.

66 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 10 und 18.

67 S. Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 22.

68 Vgl. Lavaud 2008: 176.

69 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 25–30.

ist «das Nichtdifferente einander nahe» (ἀλλήλοις τὰ μὴ ἕτερα πάρεστιν).[70] Eine wesenhafte, archetypische Verwandtschaft wird also wiederhergestellt, wenn die Seele sich dadurch paradoxerweise entfaltet, dass sie zurück zu sich kommt.

Eine Veranschaulichung dieser Rückkehr und der immer anwesenden ontologische Wesensverwandtschaft von Seele und *Einem*, ist selbst in der Sphäre nur andeutungsweise möglich, und dies aufgrund der fehlenden Bewegung im *Einem* sowie der Aufhebung der Zeit (Anfang und Ende des Weges der Seele fallen zusammen). Eine weitere nicht überwindbare Schwierigkeit, die Metaphorik Plotins zu veranschaulichen, besteht in der gleichzeitigen Sichtbarkeit des Prinzips und dessen, was von dem Prinzip abstammt. In der Tat handelt es sich einerseits um den Übergang vom *Einen* zum *Nous*, welcher in der Nicht-Hintergehbarkeit des Prinzips gründet – *per se* nicht darzustellen. Andererseits ermöglicht genau dieser Übergang eine sukzessive Abfolge von ontologischen Zuständen bis hin zu den Einzelseelen und somit immerhin eine Darstellung dessen, was aus dem *Einen* kommt. «Wir verlassen das Identische, um es darzustellen», würde der Frühromantiker Novalis kommentieren.[71] Allerdings bliebe ohne die zweite und dritte Hypostase das *Eine* unentfaltet, obwohl diese Entfaltung Jenes nicht ausschöpft. Das *Eine erscheint* also genau durch die Entfaltung der Kreise als Radien eines Zentrums, welches nur durch sie ersichtlich wird. In ihnen findet es aber keine vollständige Entfaltung und bleibt somit ein «unentfaltet Entfaltetes» (ἐξελιχθὲν οὐκ ἐξεληλιγμένον).[72]

Die Einzelseelen sind also in dieser Darstellung das Zeichen dessen, was undarstellbar bleibt; genau dadurch kann jedoch der Fluchtpunkt des herausfließende Seins ausgewiesen werden. In diesem theoretischen Mechanismus tragen die Einzelseelen zu einer Gesamtbewegung bei, die aus dem ursprünglichen Lichtpunkt als Radien ausgehen und zu diesem zusammenlaufen.[73]

4.3 *Die Umkehrung der Sehrichtung*

Aufgrund der Unzulänglichkeit menschlicher Mittel zur Beschreibung dessen, was sich in seiner Nicht-Hintergehbarkeit immer *vor* dem Denken und vor einer diskursiven Repräsentation befindet, rekurriert Plotin nun auf eine synästhesische Beschreibung des Verhältnisses zwischen Seelen und *Einem.*

70 *Ibid.* 33–4.
71 Novalis, NS II, 104, 1. S. auch Briefe, 10. Dezember 1798, in NS IV 269. Vgl. Panno 2007a.
72 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 8, 18 [39], 15–20.
73 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 8, 18 [39], 34.

> Und wir sind immer um jenes, doch blicken wir nicht immer auf dasselbe, sondern wie ein singender Chor, obwohl um den Chorführer sich scharend, sich wohl nach außen schauend wendet (εἰς τὸ ἔξω τῆς θέας), wenn er sich aber zum Chorführer hinwendet (ὅταν δὲ ἐπιστρέψῃ), schön singt und in Wahrheit um ihn ist. [...] Wir blicken nicht immer auf dasselbe, aber wenn wir auf es blicken, dann winkt uns das *Ziel und die Ruhe* (ἀνάπαυλα) und wir dissonieren nicht mit ihm (τὸ μὴ ἀπᾴδειν), indem wir in Wahrheit einen gottbegeisterten Reigen (χορείαν ἔνθεον) um es herum aufführen (χορεύουσιν ὄντως).
>
> PLOTINUS, *Enn.* 6, 9, 8 [9], 35–45.

Von der Sehrichtung sind also Genauigkeit und Harmonie des Gesanges abhängig. Der singende Chor schare sich *immer* um dem Chorführer, allerdings ohne immer auf ihn zu schauen. Nur ihm zugewendet (ἐπιστρέψῃ), kann der Chor schön singen, beziehungsweise nicht dissonieren.[74] Diese Zuwendung wiederholt bei den Einzelseelen die Hinwendung des *Nous* zum *Einen*. Misst man der letzten Bewegung den Wert einer Selbstbewegung des *Nous* zu, so gliche die erste *epistrophē* einer Selbstbewegung der Seele *qua* Rückwendung zum eigenen Ursprung. Das akustische Element, welches die Harmonie einer Kreisbewegung des Chors um das Chorführer wiedergibt, wird von einer metaphorischen Körperbewegung verstärkt, nämlich derjenigen eines Tanzes um das *Eine*. Dieser ist an sich schon ein gottbegeisterter Tanz, weil hierin eine *epistrophē* schon stattgefunden hat – oder immer noch stattfindet. Wenn der Vollzug dieser Hinwendung in der *homoiōsis theōi* besteht, dann ist diese letzte ihrerseits der erste Punkt eines weiteren Prozesses. Dieser letzte, genau untersucht in der plotinischen Forschung, kann im Allgemeinen unter dem Begriff der Katharsis verstanden werden,[75] die mit der Devise *lege alles andere ab* (ἀποθέσθαι τὰ ἄλλα)[76] einhergeht.

Für unsere Analogie der Choreutik bedeutet dies, nicht auf andere Stimmen zu hören und nur der gewünschten und besten die Aufmerksamkeit zu verleihen.[77] Da diese Stimme des *Einen* auch diejenigen des eigenen verlassenen Ursprunges enthält, bedeutet das Zuhören ein Verzicht auf alle jene Tätigkeiten, die dieses ursprüngliche Selbst verleugnen.[78] Die Bewegung der Hinwendung

74 S. Panaiotidi 2000. Dazu die textnahe Lektüre Hadots 1994: 188–9.
75 S. Barnes 1942, 362.
76 Plotinus,*Enn.* 6, 9, 9 [9], 50.
77 Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 1, 12 [10], 20.
78 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 5, 7 [23], 1–8. S. Tornau 2009: 352: «La réappropriation de notre vrai moi n'est rien d'autre pour Plotin que le retour à l'origine qui est la nôtre».

wird also zu einer Bewegung hin zum Selbst und in diesem Sinne gewiss eine *autokinēsis*, welche derjenigen des *Nous* ähnelt.

5 *Autoanthrōpos=autokinēsis?*

Im vorliegenden Beitrag haben wir die möglichen Funktionen des Begriffes *autokinēsis* betrachtet, welche hier nun anhand einer letzten philologischen Überprüfung wieder aufgegriffen werden. Es sei dahingestellt, dass die vorgeschlagene Übersetzung *Selbstbewegung* zur Diskussion genau dieser Funktionen beitragen soll, jedoch aufgrund der Reichweite des Begriffes, ihm trotzdem nicht gerecht werden kann. Der Vergleich mit ähnlichen semantischen Konstruktionen wie αὐτοάνθρωπος und αὐτοψυχή betont die Eigentümlichkeit von *autokinēsis*.

Plotin bedient sich der Ausdrücke αὐτοάνθρωπος und αὐτοψυχή im Rahmen der Differenzierung zwischen dem Menschen, der Seele und deren Ideen, also zur Gegenüberstellung der physisch behafteten und der intelligiblen Welt.[79] Da *autoanthropōs* mit 'Idee des Menschen' zu übertragen wäre, hieße *autokinēsis* die Idee der Bewegung oder die *Bewegung an sich* (wie in der Übersetzung Harders und zum Teil Brissons). Allerdings findet in den zwei oben analysierten relevanten Stellen, an denen *autokinēsis* vorkommt, keine Gegenüberstellung statt. Die Lösung von *Bewegung an sich* könnte in der Tat noch für die erste Stelle geltend gemacht werden, wobei wir annehmen müssten, dass Plotin Bewegung und Denken als Gattungen versteht. In den Duktus der zweiten Stelle würde sich diese Interpretation allerdings nicht fügen, da die *epistemē* nicht mit der Bewegung *an sich* identifiziert werden kann.

Auch die Deutung des Begriffes als ursprüngliche Bewegung kann nicht angenommen werden, es sei denn man kehrt die logische Reihenfolge des Herausfließens und Hinwendens um. Produktiv zeigt sich der Begriff auf alle Fälle, um genau die Tätigkeit an den Grenzen zwischen den Hypostasen zu untersuchen. Eine begriffliche Ausweitung erlaubt uns nämlich in der Hinwendung die Selbstbewegung zu betrachten, wenn wir darunter eben diese Rückkehr zum Ursprünglichen verstehen. Dies bedeutet die *autokinēsis* als jene Bewegung an sich auszudeuten, wodurch sich der *Nous* reflexiv bestimmt und die Seele das falsche Selbst zugunsten des wahren verlässt.[80]

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79 Plotinus, *Enn.* 5, 9, 13 [5], 1–5.

80 Eine weitere damit verbundene und hier nur zu erwähnende Frage betrifft eine mögliche Überschneidung zwischen *autokinēsis* und *to autexousion*, d.h. die Selbstbestimmung innerhalb der Selbstbewegung; vgl. dazu Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 8, 6 [39], 19–22. Stern-Gillet

6 Schlussbemerkung: *autokinēsis* als *restitutio in integrum*

Der vorliegende Beitrag hat aufgezeigt, dass der Weg zur *homoiōsis theōi* eine *kinēsis* impliziert, die ihre Zielsetzung in ihrer Auflösung finden soll. Das *Selbst* dieser Bewegung besteht in der Verwirklichung eines ontologischen Schicksals, da das angestrebte *Eine* auch den gemeinsamen Ursprung darstellt.

Der mit dieser Selbstbewegung beziehungsweise diesen *Selbstbewegungen* verbundene Vollzug, sei es von Seite des *Nous*, sei es von derjenigen der Seele, ist in einer ontologischen Gesamtbewegung miteinbegriffen. In der Hinwendung ereignet sich in der Tat eine *restitutio in integrum*, die die erste Bewegung des Herausfließens in einem Rückbezug vervollkommnet. In dieser Hinsicht kann man durch die hier unterstützte Interpretation der *autokinēsis* den Prozess des Herausfließens und Rückbeziehens als monistisch betrachten, wozu das Bild des Kreises, und umso mehr dasjenige der Sphäre, beiträgt.

Einzig der Ursprung der Bewegung sowie ihr Ziel bleiben der Transzendenz des *Einen* überlassen. Wenn der Betrachtende also in den *Einen* sein wahres Selbst schaut, so scheint das *Eine durch* die Betrachtung des *Nous* und der Seele indirekt zu sich selbst zurück zu kommen.[81] In der *epistrophē* des *Nous* und der Seele zum *Einen* kann jedoch keine wahre Hinwendung des *Einen als solchen* zu sich beinhaltet sein, weil dieses ein Abgrund ist, welcher keine Bewegung aufnimmt, sondern aus dem das Sein herausströmt.[82] Aus der Ruhe des *Einen* entspringt also eine Bewegung, die *innerhalb der Hypostasen* zu reflexiver Selbstbewegung wird. Während diese für den *Nous* eine *epistemē* des Selbst bedeutet, fällt die *autokinēsis* als Hinwendung für die Seele mit ihrer Selbstaufgabe zusammen, um eins mit dem *Einen* zu sein. Dabei verzichtet die Seele am Ende dieses Weges auch auf das Denken selbst,

> weil das Denken eine Art Bewegung war, sie selbst [die Seele im *Einen*] aber nicht bewegt werden will.
>
> PLOTINUS, *Enn.* 6, 7, 35 [38], 1–15[83]

2013: 184 merkt anhand *Enn.* 6, 8, 2 [39] 35–7 an, dass der Seele eine reine Handlung *to autexousion* («self-determination») nie möglich sein kann, weil ihre Handlung immer auch von der Sinnenwelt abhängt, welche nicht in ihrer Kontrolle sein kann. Allerdings konzentriert sich die Seele auf «die innere Betätigung der Tugend selbst, auf ihr Denken und Betrachtung» (Plotinus. *Enn.* 6, 8, 6 [39], 19–22), so wird sie auch eine (relative) Selbstbestimmung genießen. Für den *Nous* vgl. Plotinus. *Enn.* 6, 8, 6 [39], 32–35, für das *Eine* vgl. Plotinus. *Enn.* 6, 8, 15 [39], 15–20. Dazu s. Remes 2007: 180 und Leroux 1996.

81 Zentrum der Seele und Zentrum des *Einen* fallen zusammen, sowie der Betrachter und der Betrachteten in einer Verwandlung des Seelischen in das Noetische, beziehungsweise in das Hyperwesentliche des *Einen*. Vergleiche *Enn.* 6, 9, 9 [9], 47 ff.

82 Plotinus, *Enn.* 6, 8, 18 [39], 1–5 und 33–35.

83 Für die Wirkungsgeschichte dieses Themas vgl. die *Armut im Haben, Willen und Sein* in der Predigt *Beati pauperes* Eckharts (Eckhart 2008: 555).

Die Passage, die das Übergehen der Bewegung in die Ruhe thematisiert, spiegelt die Dialektik zwischen Passivität und Aktivität wieder, die *Nous* und Seele charakterisiert. Selbst das zentrale Moment der Hinwendung, welches durchaus als Tätigkeit zu konnotieren ist, birgt ein Quantum an Passivität. Die hier gemeinte *epistrophē* impliziert eine *metabolē*, wobei sehen und gesehenwerden, Ausgang und Selbstreflexion Momente einer Gesamtbewegung vom und zum *Einen* darstellen, wo keine Bewegung ist.

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